

**AN EXPLORATION OF CONSUMERS' ONLINE COMPLAINING
BEHAVIOUR ON FACEBOOK**

by

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ABSTRACT

This study explores online consumer complaining behaviour (CCB) on Facebook. The main objectives are: (1) to understand how Facebook is being used as a medium for consumer complaining, and (2) to understand why consumers complain on Facebook.

An interpretative research position and multi-method qualitative design was adopted. Netnography, a form of online ethnography, is employed as the research design. First, participant-observational methods examined posts and discussions on Facebook's official company pages, user-created pages/groups and user profiles. Then, online in-depth interviews were conducted with 37 consumers who were identified through online observations. These interviews were conducted in three forms: text-based, video-based, and email interviewing.

The findings shed light on the nature (i.e. customs and manners) of online complaining on Facebook, consumers' interactions with other consumers and companies, the role of Facebook in the complaint process, consumers' objectives for complaining on Facebook, and outcomes of these. A key contribution of this study is the development of two models: 'Integrated Model of CCB' which aims to explain the organisation of complaining actions by integrating existing CCB theories and 'Model of online CCB on Facebook' which describes the range of online complaining actions on Facebook. On the basis of the findings of this study, research implications and recommendations for the management are suggested.

DEDICATION

To my parents, Belgin and Senai

I couldn't have done this without them.

They make me feel privileged with their continuous love and support.

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LIST OF DEFINITIONS

Admin or Administrator (of a page): Admin(istrator)s are responsible for regulating the pages; they update the information section of the page and can delete posts made by other users. Creators of the pages are automatically admins, but this role can be assigned to other users as well. There are no limitations to the number of admins a page can have.

Blog: Blogs are personal websites of individuals that are updated with commentary, notes, news, experiences and other similar content. Some blog writers dedicate their blogs to particular topics, and others are general.

Boilerplate posts/answers: Boilerplate posts are generic copies that consist of standard text or wording.

Comment/Commenting: Every post on Facebook have a comment button that can be used to add comments about that particular content. Users can comment on all the content that is visible to them including others' status messages, photos, videos and links.

Group: Groups on Facebook are user-created sections that bring people who have a common interest together. Users can share content and communicate with each other on these sections.

Like (for posts): A like is a button located at the end of each post/content on Facebook. Users click on this button to show appreciation of the post. Others can see how many likes a post has gathered. In this way, this function serves as a measure of popularity for posts.

Liking (pages): Liking a page (formerly called 'being a fan' of a page) means being a follower of the page. When users like a page, they receive updates from that page on their news feed. Pages also publicly display the number of likes (i.e. followers) that they have.

Lurking: Lurking is act of observing online communities, cultures and behaviours without announcing or informing other users of this activity.

Micro-blogging: Micro-blogging is a form of blogging that creates posts which are shorter in size than regular blog posts. Micro-blogging services usually restrict the maximum number of characters in each post to ensure the size of posts (e.g. Twitter).

News feed: News feed is the homepage of Facebook. Users are automatically directed to this page when they login. News feed shows friends' recent and/or popular (i.e. based on number

of likes and comments) posts reverse chronologically. In this way, users can follow their friends' Facebook usage without visiting each profile page separately.

Page: A page is a Facebook section that can be created by businesses, organisations, celebrities, sport teams and others to communicate with Facebook users. Users can click on the like button on the page to create a connection between them and the page. In this case, posts from the page appear in the user's news feed.

Official page: Official pages are created by the official representatives of the businesses, organisations, celebrities or sports teams.

Unofficial page: Unofficial pages are created by users to show interest. Some of the unofficial pages mimic the official ones but sometimes creators of these pages clearly announce that the page is a fan page and not regulated by the representatives of the company.

Profile page: Profile pages (or profiles) are personal Facebook sections that provide information about users. A profile page usually contains a profile photo and basic information about the user. Users can also share posts, photos, information, links and videos on their profiles.

Poke: Poke is a wordless Facebook message. When users poke each other, the recipient is notified with the message that "<name of the friend> poked you".

Post: A post or Facebook post is the term that refers to particular content (text, picture, video or link) that a Facebook user shares in a given time. Facebook shows each post separately with the date of publishing.

Spam: Spam is a general term that refers to unwanted content on the Internet. On Facebook, spam posts are those that aim to advertise a product, service or Facebook page. These are usually relevant to the topic of the page (e.g. advertisements of e-books on the Amazon Kindle page), but do not aim to interact with the page or other members otherwise.

Status message: A status message is a post created by Facebook users on their own profile pages. Users can share their feelings, emotions, news and whereabouts on their status messages.

Tagging: Tagging is the act of assigning online content using keywords or terms. On Facebook users can tag posts to create links between the post and other Facebook sections such as profile pages or official pages.

Timeline: The timeline is the default area in all Facebook sections that allow users to create and post content. Timelines can be set to prevent some or all other Facebook users' posts appearing. This area was previously called 'wall'.

Tweet: Posts on Twitter are called Tweets.

Twitter: Twitter is one of the most popular micro-blogging services. It restricts Tweets to only 140 characters.

Wall: See timeline.

CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

This thesis explores online consumer complaining behaviour (CCB) on Facebook¹. The Internet has influenced how businesses work and consumers behave, and has changed the way traditional marketplaces operate. Facebook, as one of the most popular social networking sites (SNSs) is the second most visited website in the world (Ofcom, 2012a; Alexa, 2013). Consumers use Facebook to engage in a variety of consumption-related activities including complaining. Given the ease and speed of these online communications, managers need to understand what complaining activities on Facebook mean for their businesses. In the age of the Internet and computer-mediated communications, it is anticipated that the findings of this research will be helpful to managers who seek to engage with or respond to their consumers' complaining activities on Facebook.

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the research area and draw the roadmap that is employed for this study. The chapter starts with Section 1.2 presenting the background of the research, and Section 1.3 explaining the rationale for this study. Then, in Section 1.4 the research questions and objectives are discussed. Finally, Section 1.5 introduces the structure of the thesis.

1.2. Research Background

With the advance of communication technologies and the Internet, the world has become more connected. Internet users in the UK spent 65% more time online in 2010 than in 2007 (UKOM, 2010), while in the USA they spent 81% more time online in 2009 than in 2006 (Knight, 2009). This explosive worldwide growth of the Internet has led to a proliferation of

¹ <http://www.facebook.com>

communication technologies and increased the ways in which consumers can communicate with one another and companies. A variety of online mediums such as instant messaging, email, chat-rooms, and SNSs can now be used to communicate without being limited with geographical and economic boundaries (Kozinets, 1999). This convenience has enabled Internet users to engage in more consumption-related online activities: now they can chat about brands, interact directly with companies, seek support or advice from other consumers, form brand communities, share information and complain online (Goldsmith and Horowitz, 2006; Kimmel, 2010; Cole et al., 2011). This expansion in online interaction among consumers is considered to be one of the main changes in consumer behaviour today (Bailey, 2004; Solomon et al., 2010).

One of the outcomes of consumption-related online consumer activities is the use of online communication mediums (e.g. blogs, online forums, SNSs) as complaining channels. Due to the advances in the communication capabilities of the Internet and computer-mediated communication channels, these new complaining channels have changed the complaining process from one-to-one static communications between the consumer and the business or consumer to consumer into a broader form of communication which is also open to and accessible by the public (Hong and Lee, 2005; Goetzinger et al., 2006). Hence, complaining activities can now reach and potentially influence large numbers of people (Prendergast et al., 2010). As these are no longer limited to family and friends, the source of the complaining activity can be strangers or even totally anonymous (Schindler and Bickart, 2005; Goldsmith and Horowitz, 2006; Sen and Lerman, 2007). Therefore, consumers are not limited to obtaining information from their family and friends any more: they can access vast amounts of information using a variety of online sources (Prendergast et al., 2010). In comparison with the fleeting aspect of spoken negative word-of-mouth (WOM) communications, online

complaining activities are also more permanent. They remain accessible over time to others, so that consumers can acquire information at their own pace and return to it whenever they want. Moreover, the act of complaining on the Internet does not have to be limited to plain text: consumers can use other online elements such as pictures, animations, videos or music to make the process of complaining more entertaining or interesting for them and others (Prendergast et al., 2010). Therefore, these new online complaining channels are reshaping CCB and should receive research attention for further analysis.

In recent years, SNSs have become one of the most popular types of online communication channels (boyd and Ellison, 2007; Lenhart et al., 2010; Mintel, 2012; Ofcom, 2012a). The most widespread and popular SNS, Facebook, is also the second most visited website globally, with more than 1.15 billion users (Alexa, 2013; Facebook, 2013a). SNSs offer a variety of features and sections to enable users to create and share content easily. These can be used to communicate with friends, the public and even companies. Complaining is one of the consumption-related activities on SNSs, along with others such as reading and writing product reviews, sharing information, forming brand communities and posting photos showing products. Complaining on Facebook has transferred offline CCB such as negative WOM conversations into easy and automatic exchanges between consumers (Shih, 2009). For example, when consumers complain on their Facebook profile pages, their friends will be informed about this complaint automatically, as Facebook's news feed (i.e. homepage) shows updates from friends. In this way, consumers do not need to expend extra effort to share negative information with all their friends. As a result, now "[consumers] no longer search for news; rather, the news finds [them]" (Qualman, 2012:9). Moreover, businesses can also use Facebook to engage in direct communication with their consumers. For example, 87% of Fortune 100 companies had official Facebook pages in 2012 (Burson-Marsteller, 2012).

Using these pages, consumers can now voice their complaints directly to the companies on Facebook. Along with the popularity of Facebook, this means that it is vital for companies to understand how consumers use Facebook as a channel of complaining in order to determine their involvement with this behaviour, including how to monitor and manage negative comments made about their brands.

1.3. Rationale for the Study

Consumer complaints are known to be damaging for companies (e.g. Richins, 1983; Singh, 1988). More recent research has shown that online reviews, both positive and negative, influence purchase decisions (Schindler and Bickart, 2005; Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; Davis and Khazanchi, 2008) and brand image perceptions (Bickart and Schindler, 2001; Allsop et al., 2007). Some of these studies found that negative online reviews appear to be more powerful than positive ones, decreasing sales and profits (Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; Park and Lee, 2009). However, consumer complaints also provide an opportunity for companies to retain their consumers by offering redress or simply a channel through which to vent their negative feelings (Gilly and Gelb, 1982; Alicke et al., 1992; Hong and Lee, 2005). Therefore, successful complaint management can actually increase consumer satisfaction and loyalty. In general, CCB is an area of interest for researchers and professionals; when directed to companies, these behaviours can be useful in terms of addressing failures, and when directed to other consumers (e.g. negative WOM) they can be potentially detrimental through the diffusion of damaging information. It is, therefore, valuable to explore complaining activities in order to understand consumers and to design appropriate responses. As Yeh and Choi (2011:145) note “in the era of digital media, a consumer can spread the word at the speed of light by telling thousands of other consumers with a few clicks”, and therefore the

convenience and opportunities of computer-mediated communication channels has increased the importance of understanding online CCB.

Considerable research has examined offline CCB, which includes activities such as face-to-face complaining in store, abandoning the company and negative WOM. As a result, seminal works have been developed to explain these (Day and Landon, 1977; Singh, 1988; Cri  , 2003). However, online CCB is yet to be explored in-depth. Previous research has so far explored the nature of online CCB on complaint websites (e.g. Harrison-Walker, 2001; Tripp and Gregoire, 2011), and on anti-brand websites (e.g. Ward and Ostrom, 2006), or online negative WOM communications on online forums (e.g. Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), and on the micro-blogging site Twitter (Jansen et al., 2009). Additionally, company practices on Facebook as a response to consumer complaining and as part of crisis management have been examined (e.g. Byrd, 2012; Dekay, 2012). Despite the great interest in consumption-related content on Facebook by consumer behaviour researchers (e.g. Hollenbeck and Kaikati, 2012; Lilley et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2012), not much is known about consumers' complaining activities on Facebook.

Moreover, most of the past research has primarily focused on the valence and volume of consumers' complaining messages (e.g. Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; East et al., 2008). Sweeney et al. (2012) argue that this approach fails to explore the power and scope of communications, and suggest that the content of the complaining messages should also be considered. In this way, it is possible to examine individual complaints through message characteristics such as the amount of detail and vividness of the message.

Without exploratory research, there is a lack of consensus on online complaint handling strategies on Facebook, which may result in more dissatisfaction and negative reputation for companies. Given this gap in the literature, this research study aims to contribute to the understanding of CCB on Facebook. The findings can also be used to produce recommendations for managers for the appropriate planning and implications of online complaint handling strategies.

1.4. Research Questions and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this research is to explore online CCB on Facebook to broaden understanding of *how* and *why* consumers make online complaints using this channel. As the focus of this study is to explore consumer behaviour in this area, this research adopts qualitative research methodologies, following Carson et al. (2001), who note that qualitative research methods are suitable for gaining in-depth understanding of how and why a certain phenomenon occurs. The main questions of this research were therefore:

1. How is Facebook being used as a medium for consumer complaining?
2. Why do consumers complain on Facebook?

To answer the research questions, specific research objectives were pursued for each question. The first research question seeks to understand how consumers use Facebook for complaining with the following objectives:

- to explore the nature of online complaining on Facebook
- to examine interactions on Facebook as a result of CCB among consumers and with the company

- to identify at which stages in the complaint process consumers prefer to complain on Facebook
- to provide an understanding of consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction following online complaining on Facebook

The second research question aims to understand the reasons for complaining activities on Facebook with the following objectives:

- to articulate consumers' objectives for online complaining on Facebook
- to describe the organisational, situational and technological factors influencing online complaining behaviours on Facebook
- to explore expected and actual outcomes of online complaining on Facebook

1.5. Structure of the Thesis

This section outlines the structure of the thesis. In total, it consists of 11 chapters as detailed below.

Chapter 1 introduces the background of the research problem and presents the rationale behind this study. The research questions and objectives of the study are also discussed.

Given the novelty of Facebook as a complaining channel and the complexity of Facebook features and sections, the thesis continues with an introduction and review of Facebook in Chapter 2. After presenting brief information on Web 2.0, user-generated content and social media, this chapter focuses on social networking sites, and particularly Facebook. The history and structure of Facebook is discussed, aiming to provide a deep understanding of this platform. Finally, this chapter reviews the types of Facebook sections in order to design a

classification of Facebook sections which can then be used for sampling and data collection purposes.

Chapter 3 reviews the literature on consumer complaining behaviour. Communicating the definition, consumers' objectives and importance of these behaviours, this chapter aims to describe the phenomenon under study. For this purpose, it explores the variety of complaining activities in order to provide a structuring and systematisation of CCB actions. As a result, this chapter develops the 'Integrated Model of CCB' which defines the complaining actions used in the later parts of the study.

Chapter 4 focuses on the review of factors influencing complaining behaviours. The chapter first categorises these factors and then explores those adopted in this study in detail. Finally, an evaluation of the factors is presented to provide insights into their nature and their relation to the complaining actions from the Integrated Model of CCB.

The purpose of Chapter 5 is to review online CCB and complaint handling in online and offline environments. The chapter begins by reviewing the impact, advantages and limitations of online complaining for consumers. Key issues regarding the classification of online complaining channels are presented and factors influencing online complaining are discussed. The chapter concludes with a review of complaint handling literature, based upon which the findings of this study are interpreted.

Chapter 6 addresses the philosophical standpoint of this study, including the theoretical perspective and epistemological and ontological considerations. In addition, the research approach (i.e. qualitative) is outlined, and 'trustworthiness', which assesses qualitative studies- by credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability- is discussed.

Building upon the preceding review of literature and the philosophical standpoint, Chapter 7 outlines the research design applied in this exploratory study. This chapter starts by exploring netnography, the main methodology of this study. The two methods of data collection (i.e. participant-observations and in-depth interviews) are then described in detail. This is followed by a discussion of ethical considerations accompanying this study and the practices adopted in order to overcome potential problems with these. Finally, methodological limitations and their implications are recognised in this chapter.

Chapters 8 and 9 present the key research findings. Chapter 8 reports findings from the first stage of data collection: observations. It includes findings on the nature of complaining on Facebook, consumers' interactions while they complain on Facebook, consumers' (perceived) objectives of complaining on Facebook, and observed outcomes of complaining on Facebook. Chapter 9 presents research findings from the second stage: in-depth online interviews. It includes objectives of CCB on Facebook, factors that influence complaining on Facebook, stages in the complaint process, and actual outcomes of complaints on Facebook. Chapters 8 and 9 present verbatim extracts from consumers' Facebook posts and transcripts to provide examples from actual data and to express the interviewees' own evaluations of their complaining behaviours. Interpretations of these are also presented.

Building upon Chapters 8 and 9, Chapter 10 provides a discussion of key findings in relation to the theoretical foundations of this study. Using key research findings and the Integrated Model of CCB, this chapter develops the 'Model of online CCB' in order to provide an explanation of online complaining actions. The research findings are discussed so as to fulfil research objectives in four sections: the Model of online CCB, stages in the complaint process, factors influencing CCB on Facebook, and objectives of complaining on Facebook.

Chapter 11 draws conclusions by summarising the research findings, presenting the research contributions and discussing their implications. Research contributions are presented in relation to the theoretical and methodological frameworks of the study. This is followed by research implications and recommendations for management, which are grouped into two areas: (1) company strategies for complaint management on Facebook, and (2) daily online complaint handling practices on Facebook. Finally, the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research are presented to conclude the study.

CHAPTER 2- INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES & FACEBOOK

“On Facebook, everyone can be an editor, a content creator, a producer and a distributor. All the classic old-media hats are being worn by everyone.”

David Kirkpatrick, The Facebook Effect (2011)

1.1. Introduction

Given the novel and complex structures of social networking sites (SNSs), the main aim of this chapter is to introduce how SNSs, and particularly Facebook, work. The growth in the Internet and computer-mediated communications has altered the way in which we communicate. Among the variety of online communication media (e.g. email and instant messaging), SNSs are one of the most popular communication methods of the last decade (boyd and Ellison, 2007; Mintel, 2012; Ofcom, 2012a). These websites receive the highest web traffic worldwide (Alexa, 2013). Users can engage in a variety of public and private activities that enhance their interaction with others. SNSs have not only influenced interpersonal communications, but have also reshaped the relationship between businesses and consumers. Businesses can locate themselves on SNSs in order to advertise, or engage in direct conversations with their consumers. To an extent, traditional marketing approaches based on one-way exchange have evolved into reciprocal communications between companies and consumers through the use of SNSs.

This chapter (1) provides an introduction to SNSs and Facebook in order to understand the nature of social networking, and (2) examines the structure of Facebook in order to understand its characteristics, and develop a classification of Facebook sections, to be used in the latter parts of this study. Section 2.2 starts by introducing concepts that form the basis of SNSs, presenting information on ‘Web 2.0’, ‘user-generated content’ and ‘social media’. Section 2.3 focuses on SNSs reviewing their history briefly. Finally, Section 2.4 explores the

history and structure of Facebook, introduces Facebook sections and develops the classification of them to be used in this study.

1.2. Web 2.0, User-Generated Content and Social Media

With the increasing popularity of SNSs, terms like social media, Web 2.0 and user-generated content have been used intensively and interchangeably in both business and academic contexts. This section provides insights to the meanings of these terms and how they are used in this study.

In the early days of the Internet, users were limited to viewing content generated and published by website creators. Later, web platforms and applications evolved to allow users to create and share their own content, such as SNSs and blogs. ‘Web 2.0’ describes this change in the utilisation of Internet from static websites to dynamic platforms which can be modified by all users (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Thanks to the emergence of Web 2.0, users can now create and share their content with others. The technological infrastructure of Web 2.0 can be used to create content in the form of text, audio, visual images and video. The term ‘user-generated content’ defines the various forms of online content created and distributed on the Internet by end users, rather than professionals (Daugherty et al., 2008). Web 2.0 and user-created content together compose ‘social media’. Social media is defined as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:61).

Social media applications such as SNSs and micro-blogging are the most popular online activities. According to comScore research (2013a), Internet users in the UK spend most of their online time on social media. This high popularity has also encouraged all kinds of

business from the local to the global to take part in social media. The number of local businesses with Facebook pages increased 100% between June 2012 and May 2013 to 16 million (Facebook, 2013b), and Burson-Marsteller's (2012) research data suggested that in 2012, 87% of Fortune 100 companies used at least one social media platform.

SNSs are one of the most popular social media applications. The next section describes SNSs and reviews their current status, including a brief history of social networking.

1.3. Social Networking Sites

An SNS is a website that allows users to construct an online profile page for themselves and develop a network of connections through creating linkages between their profile pages (Ofcom, 2008). They are used for social interactions and interpersonal exchanges between users (Donath and boyd, 2004; Pempek et al., 2009). Communication on SNSs is mostly asynchronous: users can contribute or track changes whenever they want, but some SNSs also offer instant chat facilities. SNSs offer both private (e.g. private messaging) and public (e.g. posting on profile pages, discussion boards) tools for communication.

Shih (2009) described the emergence of social networking as the fourth revolution that brought radical changes in technology, the first three being the invention of mainframe computing, the use of personal computers, and the advent of the World Wide Web. Each of these revolutions changed the existing technological infrastructure, became commercialised, led to new applications, and finally changed the way businesses work (Shih, 2009). In the same way, SNSs such as Friendster, MySpace and Facebook have influenced consumers and businesses by making the world more connected (boyd and Ellison, 2007).

Early examples of SNSs, such as SixDegrees (founded in 1997) and Friendster (founded in 2002), provided the ability to create personal profiles, establish connections with friends and browse through lists of existing connections (boyd and Ellison, 2007; Kirkpatrick, 2011). Users could present themselves, articulate their networks, and establish and maintain their connections in these networks (Ellison et al., 2007). In this way, notions of profile pages and friendship connections became everyday concepts, and established the groundwork for popular SNSs such as Facebook and LinkedIn (Shih, 2009). The increasing use of high-speed Internet and emergence of Web 2.0 technologies allowed SNSs to enhance the variety of tools and features they offered. Providing more functionalities for interacting with others, such as adding photos and creating blog entries, enriched the experience of social networking and offered different mediums of communication.

Global SNS visitors increased 175% between 2007 and 2011 (comScore, 2011). In 2012, 62% of the UK population used at least one SNS, and this number reached as high as 87% among those aged 16-24 (Ofcom, 2012b). SNSs became the third most used means of communicating with friends and family following text messaging and voice calls on mobile phones in the UK (Ofcom, 2012a). According to Alexa (2013), the five most popular SNSs are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, and Pinterest. Facebook has been the most popular SNS since 2008, when its monthly visitors and registered users surpassed MySpace. According to the company's latest announcement it has 1.15 billion monthly active users (see Section 2.4 for more information). Twitter mainly focuses on micro-blogging rather than social networking. Users can post short messages up to 140 characters and follow what others post. In this way, it offers a fast diffusion of information. It has more than 500 million monthly active users (Lunden, 2012). LinkedIn as one of the oldest SNSs is a business-orientated networking tool for professionals. Profile pages contain users' business information

and CV, and users can connect with each other, endorse their skills, write recommendations, and ask to be introduced to others. Google+ is a generic purpose SNS like Facebook. As of December 2012, it had more than 500 million users (Gundotra, 2012). Lastly, Pinterest serves as a photo sharing website. Users can create and manage collections of images, upload their photos, and follow others.

The next section introduces Facebook and provides information about its functionality and structure.

1.4. Facebook

Facebook is the most popular SNS, the second most visited website in the UK and in the world (Ofcom, 2012a; Alexa, 2013). It has grown from 20 million monthly active users in 2007 to 1.15 billion in 2013 (Facebook, 2013a). In 2012, 63% of Internet users in the UK visited Facebook (Mintel, 2012) spending an average of 6.5 half hours per month on Facebook (Ofcom, 2012a), and in the USA, 10.8% of minutes spent online were on Facebook (comScore, 2013b). When Facebook announced one billion monthly active users in September 2012, it also had 600 million active mobile users. At this date, on Facebook there were 140.3 billion friend connections, 219 billion photos uploaded, 1.13 trillion likes, and 17 billion location tags (Facebook, 2013c).

Facebook defines its mission as “to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected” (Facebook, 2013a). Similar to other SNSs, users must register with their real identities, and create a profile page, and they can then start creating friendship connections with others. Once a friendship connection is established between two users, friends can view each other’s profiles, browse information on their pages, and communicate privately or publicly with each other. Communication between strangers, and viewing their

profiles and information, are more limited and shaped by the personal privacy options of each user.

Ofcom (2008) listed six activities users engage in on Facebook: setting up a profile, building a social network, communicating with others, engaging in applications, engaging in political and social issues, and advertising and marketing. One of the main reasons for using Facebook is to maintain existing relationships and connectedness rather than forming new friendships (Ellison et al., 2007; Pempek et al., 2009; Köbler et al., 2010; Grieve et al., 2013). In particular, users who are geographically separated rely on SNSs to maintain their connections and share information with their friends (Ellison et al., 2007; Hampton et al., 2011). The most popular activities are sending private messages (76% of Facebook users), posting (and reading) updates (74%), and sharing personal photos (72%) (Mintel, 2012). Users can also view information without directly interacting with each other (Pempek et al., 2009). This type of online ‘lurking’ also creates a non-verbal information transfer between users.

The next sections present the history and structure of Facebook.

1.4.1. History of Facebook

Mark Zuckerberg created Facebook in his dorm room at Harvard University in February 2004 (Kirkpatrick, 2011). At the time, Facebook was available only for Harvard students. It was gradually expanded to national and overseas universities, high schools and companies, until Facebook opened up registration to everyone aged 13 and older on September 2006 (Kirkpatrick, 2011; Facebook, 2013e).

One of the major differences of Facebook from other SNSs is its platform. Since May 2007, Facebook has worked as a platform on which applications by other developers can operate (Facebook, 2013e). In this way, computer programmers, companies, organisations and other

websites can develop their own applications which can work inside Facebook. These applications can use Facebook's data such as users' friend lists, photos and demographics. Facebook does not limit the scope of applications, which include and are not limited to gaming, networking, shopping, listening to music, and sharing recipes.

In November 2007, having reached more than 20 million active monthly users, Facebook introduced public sections for artists, public figures, businesses, brands, organisations and non-profit organisations. These sections are called 'pages', and are used by these parties to obtain a Facebook presence, and connect with their stakeholders (Facebook, 2013d). Like friendship connections, users could create connection with these pages by 'liking' them. When users like a page, they become followers of the page and receive updates from the page on their news feed. Companies and businesses use this feature to communicate with their consumers and broadcast information.

1.4.2. Complaining on Facebook

Complaining activities on Facebook can easily diffuse with the help of technological structures and friendship networks. Consumers can create their own complaining activities in minutes, join others in their complaints, and share these publicly. Kirkpatrick (2011:290) explained this in his book:

“Facebook has now become one of the first places dissatisfied people worldwide take their gripes, activism, and protests. These campaigns on Facebook work well because its viral communications tools enable large numbers to become aware of an issue and join together quickly”

One famous example of consumers' collective complaining behaviours on Facebook regarded the Cadbury's Wispa chocolate bar, discontinued in 2003. In 2007, Cadbury decided to re-launch the product after 93 Facebook groups with more than 14,000 members campaigned for

the re-launch of the product (Poynter, 2008). This is one of the earliest examples of consumers' joining together on Facebook to voice their concerns to companies and the public. Cadbury's decision and Facebook's influence on this decision led to news coverage. Several other significant collective complaining activities followed. Nestlé is another company which suffered early on from complaining on Facebook. After a Greenpeace campaign aimed to diffuse information about the destruction of Indonesian rainforests, some Facebook users wanted to voice their concerns on the company's official Facebook page. Sharing their comments, YouTube videos about the case, and altered versions of the Nestlé logo, these consumers were not welcomed by the administrators (admins) of the Nestlé page. They deleted consumers' posts, replied to some in an aggressive tone, and caused further anger among consumers. News of how Nestlé dealt with criticism spread on other Facebook sections and other social media channels, as well as the traditional media. Eventually, Nestlé apologised and announced that they changed their social media administration policy. Another infamous case was in 2010 when Gap announced their new logo and re-branding decisions. In two weeks, thousands of Tweets (i.e. Twitter posts) and countless Facebook groups were created to complain about the new logo. Consumers not only criticised the logo, they made fun of the company, and even designed their own logos as suggestions. Gap reverted to the old logo, acknowledged their mistake, and thanked the consumers.

1.4.3. Structure of Facebook

Facebook incorporates a variety of sections and tools that can be used for communication and interaction, including profile pages (or 'timeline'), news feed, graph searching, messages, photos, groups, events and pages (Facebook, 2013d). Almost all of these sections can also be accessed using Facebook's mobile application on phones and tablets. When users first login to Facebook, they are directed to the news feed. This is a section that broadcasts updates about

friends' recent activities on Facebook and updates from the pages that users have liked. It can be imagined as a personal newspaper for each user that publishes information regarding their friends and interests in reverse chronological order. In this way, users can stay informed about recent Facebook activities, and can join or share these activities easily themselves.

Since the present study is about consumers' complaining behaviours, the rest of this section covers Facebook sections that can be used for complaining purposes. These are the sections that allow users to share their own content. The main difference in Facebook sections is their visibility to others. Hence, they are grouped as private and public at the first level. Private pages are those that are open only to a limited number of Facebook users, such as profile pages. Users can select who can view their profiles (e.g. only their friends or friends of friends). Public pages, on the other hand, can be viewed by everybody, including Internet users without Facebook accounts.

Below private (i.e. profile pages), and public (i.e. pages and groups) Facebook sections are examined in more detail.

1.4.3.1. Private Facebook Sections: Profile pages

Every Facebook user has a profile page which is the main source of information about that person. It contains the user's profile photo and personal information, which may include hometown, gender, religion, interests, education background and political affiliations (Lampe et al., 2007). Since users can construct their profile pages as they wish, these can be used for self-expression.

Additionally, consumers can share content they create in the form of text (also known as status), photos, videos and links. Statuses are one of the most common communication methods on Facebook. University students update their status approximately every 5.5 days

(Carr et al., 2012:186). When users update their status, this message is shown on their own profile, and also broadcast to friends through their news feeds, reaching their Facebook friends. Friends can post their replies or comments to these statuses as in asynchronous conversations. Facebook users mainly share emotive and assertive (i.e. statements of fact) messages on their profiles, and occasionally include humour (Carr et al., 2012). It is found that regardless of the content of the message, using status to share information creates feelings of connectedness among Facebook users (Köbler et al., 2010).

1.4.3.2. Public Facebook Sections: Pages and Groups

SNSs usually have public discussion sections for information sharing and communication. On Facebook, two different sections are used for this purpose: 'pages' and 'groups'. Groups are user-created sections which bring people who have common interests together. When users join groups, they can view information about the group and lists of members and join discussions. Public groups are open to everybody and can be found through the Facebook search facility, but it is also possible to create private groups that accept users by invitation only. Part et al. (2009) defined four reasons for users to participate in Facebook groups as socialising, entertainment, self-status seeking, and information seeking.

Until November 2007, groups were the only discussion sections available on Facebook, and they were occasionally used by companies and public sector organisations to engage with stakeholders, and to create and strengthen relationships. Facebook launched 'pages' (formerly called 'fan pages') in 2007 and now businesses use these for their organisation, products, brands or specific marketing activities. These are completely public sections that are open to browse freely. Consumers can also contribute if the company allows posts from users. Otherwise, only creators and admins can post and contribute on the page. Some companies prefer to close their pages to consumers' contributions (e.g. Nike), while others allow their

consumers to post their content as well (e.g. Google). Additionally, admins can delete posts and ban members from a page.

Facebook pages are different to Facebook groups in two main ways. First, only official representatives of organisations are allowed to create pages, whereas anybody can create a group about a topic that they want to discuss. Secondly, the personal identities of the creators and admins are not displayed on pages, but on groups, users' own identities must be displayed. In this way, Facebook aims to reserve the groups feature for people who want to talk about shared interests while creating a professional tool for organisations and businesses to communicate with Facebook users. On the other hand, there are no limitations for creating pages and groups: all Facebook users can create both of these, and use them to communicate with others.

Public pages/groups can have different characteristics based on the creator and the topic of the page. Subsections 2.4.3.2.1 and 2.4.3.2.2 describe these two factors that create variation between pages and groups.

1.4.3.2.1. Creator of the Page/Group

One of the factors that shape pages and groups is the creator of it. Facebook allows companies, organisations and businesses to have an official presence through pages. However, users can create both pages and groups. Since Facebook only permits official representatives to create a page, all pages bearing the names of companies and products could be expected to be official pages created by them. However, preliminary observations revealed that some Facebook users create pages for companies without having any official connection. These user-created pages might confuse consumers when they look for the official ones, especially if they are not aware that on Facebook anybody can create a page. In this study,

these kind of user-created pages are called ‘unofficial pages’, and pages created by the official representatives are called ‘official pages’.

Companies can use their official pages to communicate with consumers directly on Facebook. It is also possible to install applications on pages to allow other activities such as gaming, online shopping or reviewing products. In 2012, 87% of Fortune 100 companies had Facebook pages, and 93% of these companies updated their pages weekly, and 70% responded to comments from consumers on their page (Burson-Marsteller, 2012). These companies had on average 152,646 followers, which showed an increase of 275% since 2010 (Burson-Marsteller, 2012). Apart from global corporations, in May 2013, 16 million local businesses had official pages for their business (Facebook, 2013b). Companies can post content and reply to consumers’ posts. When companies create their own content on Facebook, they mostly engage in five types of activity: “direct marketing of product or services, promotion of sponsored events, surveys, informational announcements, and fun postings” (Dekay, 2012:290). Consumers who have liked the page will be notified about these posts on their news feed.

As noted earlier, Facebook users sometimes create unofficial pages and groups dedicated to companies. Unofficial pages are sometimes not easy to identify. The creators of these pages might deliberately or non-deliberately construct their pages to seem like official company pages. For example, Apple does not have an official page, but there is a user-created page called ‘Apple, Inc’ which can create confusion among consumers who search for Apple’s official page on Facebook. However, some pages clearly state that their page is a form of

brand community for the fans of the brand. According to Facebook, users created more than 37 million pages by the end of 2011 (Facebook, 2012)².

1.4.3.2.2. Topic of the Page/Group

The second factor that differentiates pages/groups is the topic of the pages. There are no limitations in terms of the number of pages that a user or company can create. Official representatives and consumers create different types of pages for companies. These pages can be devoted to the brand name of the company, products and services, geographical areas, specific campaigns or promotions. For example, Kraft and Nestlé have corporate level pages with their brand names (e.g. ‘Kraft – Corporation’ and ‘Nestlé’), pages for a particular product (e.g. ‘Cadbury Dairy Milk’ and ‘KitKat’), pages for countries (e.g. ‘Kraft Foods Australia’ and ‘Nestlé Brasil’), and pages for specific campaigns and events (e.g. ‘Kraft Celebration Tour’ and ‘Nestlé First 1000 Days’). Fortune 100 companies have 10.4 pages each on average (Burson-Marsteller, 2012). Having different pages for different brands and products can help companies to create and develop different marketing activities, and target particular segments for specific products.

Similarly, users can create pages/groups for different purposes. They can devote their pages/groups to brands (e.g. ‘Mc Donald’s’), particular products (e.g. ‘Mc Donald’s Fries’). And they can also create pages/groups about the brands that they do not like (e.g. ‘I hate Big Mac’). Moreover, if consumers have a specific issue that bothers them, they can create a page/group about that particular issue rather than using generic named pages/groups (e.g. ‘Boycott Nike for signing Michael Vick’). Some of the brand groups/pages are actively used for communication purposes. For example, ‘Boycott Nestle’ was a group with more than 18,500 members during the period of data collection. Members of this group regularly shared

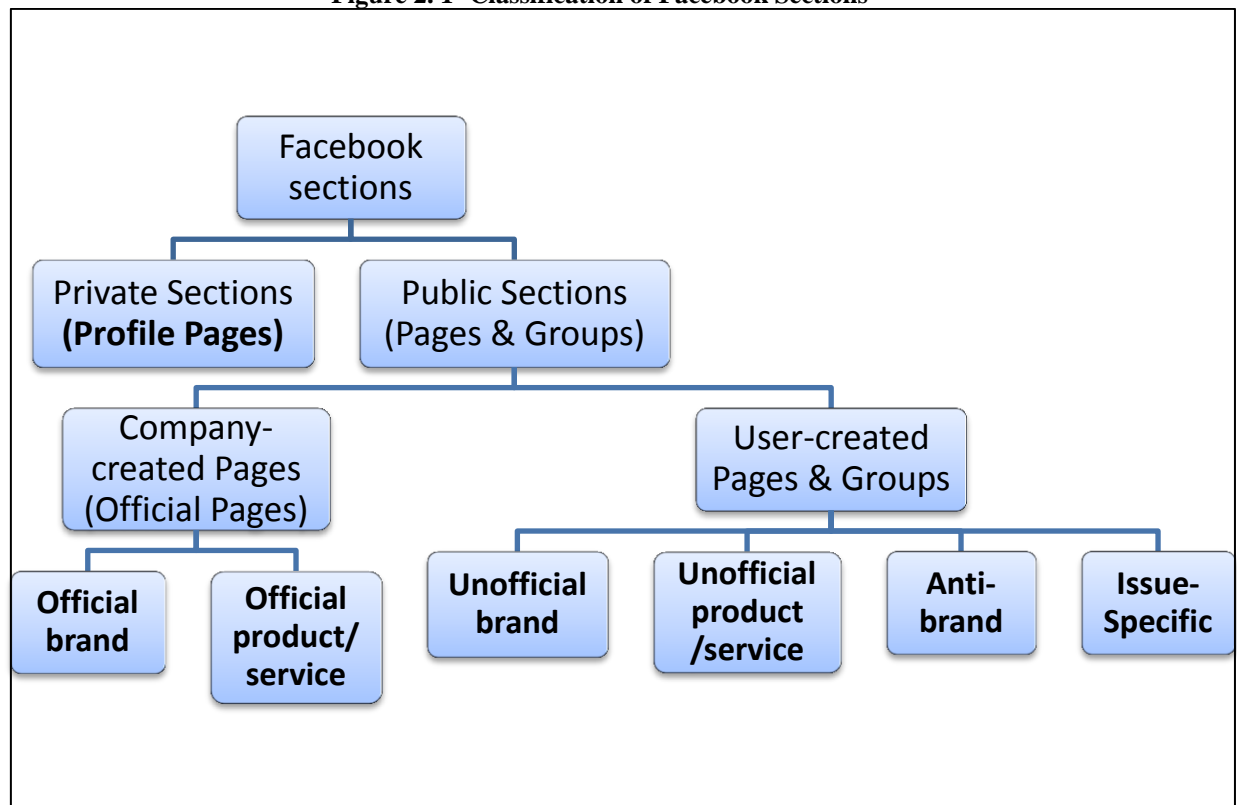
² Reference is no longer available

information and organised events using this page. However, some others are less active. Lastly, it is also important to note that names of pages/groups might be interpreted differently by consumers. For example, the group called ‘I bet I can find 1,000,000 people who dislike Heineken’ might be about disliking the taste of Heineken for some consumers, but might refer to having a hangover after drinking too much Heineken for others (Casteleyn et al., 2009).

1.4.4. Types of Facebook Sections

This section introduces the Facebook sections that are used in this study. Figure 2.1 presents a visual display of the classification of the Facebook section for this purpose.

Figure 2. 1- Classification of Facebook Sections



Facebook sections can be private or publicly accessible. Profile pages are private Facebook sections. These can be used to communicate with existing Facebook connections. Pages and groups are public sections visible to all Internet users. These can be used by existing friends

or strangers to interact. Users can create both pages and groups, but companies can only create pages. For the purposes of this study, two types of company-created or official pages are used: brand focused and product/service focused. These were named ‘official brand pages’ and ‘official product/service pages’ in this study.

Additionally, four types of user-created pages and groups which are used for consumer complaining were explored: ‘unofficial brand pages’, ‘unofficial product/service pages’, ‘anti-brand pages and groups’, and ‘pages and groups with specific issues’. Unofficial brand pages/groups are created by users but devoted to companies or their brand names. Unofficial product/service pages and groups are again created by users, but they are about a particular product or service of the company. These two types of page/group can be used for both praising and complaining. Additionally, pages/groups can be created specifically for complaining and boycott purposes. These are either devoted to a company in general, or focus on a specific issue or problem. Pages and groups against companies usually have the words ‘boycott’ or ‘hate’ in their names (e.g. ‘We hate Ryanair’ and ‘Boycott Nike’). These were named ‘anti-brand’ pages and groups in this study. Lastly, pages/groups that focus on a particular problem were referred to as ‘pages/groups with specific issues’.

This study will focus on profile pages as the private communication sections and the six types of public pages related to companies to explore CCB on Facebook.

1.5. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the nature, structure and history of SNSs and Facebook. SNSs are one of the most popular communication media of today. They allow users to create relationships and share user-created content privately or publicly. Facebook, the most popular online social community, offers easy and convenient communication channels that can be

used for both interpersonal and public exchanges. For the purposes of this study, this chapter offered a classification of Facebook sections that can be used for complaining purposes (see Figure 2.1). This study focuses on seven types of Facebook sections: 'profile pages', 'official brand pages', 'official product/service pages', 'unofficial product/service pages and groups', 'unofficial product/service pages and groups', 'anti-brand pages or groups', and 'pages and groups with specific issues'.

Chapter 3 will review the literature on offline consumer complaining behaviour in order to develop an understanding in this area.

CHAPTER 3- LITERATURE REVIEW: CONSUMER COMPLAINING BEHAVIOUR

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a review of consumer complaining behaviour (CCB). Literature on CCB draws theoretical contributions from research areas such as consumer behaviour and attitudes, consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and complaint handling. This chapter as the first part of the literature review aims to investigate understanding of the research area and the interrelations of different complaining actions. For this purpose, five influential theories of CCB– Hirschman’s (1970) theory of exit, voice and loyalty; Day and Landon’s (1977) dichotomy; Day et al.’s (1981) conceptualisation; Singh’s (1988) three-dimensional taxonomy and Cri  ’s (2003) diachronic approach- are discussed and evaluated. This review will form the basis for the discussion in the next two chapters which investigate factors influencing CCB and online complaining behaviour.

This chapter is organised as follows. Section 3.2 investigates the definition and objectives of CCB in order to describe the area of study, and discusses the importance of CCB for companies as a rationale for the relevance of this study. Section 3.3 illustrates existing theories and classifications of traditional complaining behaviours, and then Section 3.4 evaluates these in order to create a model that aims to integrate existing models in a way to explain the range of complaining actions.

3.2. Consumer Complaining Behaviour: Definition, Objectives and Importance

Consumer complaining behaviour has been an area of academic interest since the mid-1960s. This area of research mainly focuses on analysing and understanding consumer behaviour in the case of dissatisfaction with a product/service. One early definition of CCB is by Jacoby

and Jaccard (1981:6): “an action taken by an individual which involves communicating something negative regarding a product or a service to either the firm manufacturing or marketing that product or service, or to some third-party organizational entity”. However, this definition does not appear complete because it does not acknowledge other notable complaining actions such as WOM communications and exit from the company, which are also options for dissatisfied consumers. Therefore, the next subsection explores definitional issues of CCB, and Sections 3.2.1.2 and 3.2.1.3 discuss the objectives and the importance of complaining behaviours for companies.

3.2.1. Definition of CCB

This section explores the three most common dimensions of CCB definitions in order to attain a definition that satisfies the need of this study: dissatisfaction, sources of dissatisfaction and action type.

3.2.1.1. Dissatisfaction

Consumers’ consumption experience does not end after purchase and/or usage of the product/service. Post-purchase processes such as evaluation of a product/service and/or the overall consumption experience are also considered consumer activities (Solomon et al., 2010). The post-purchase stages lead consumers to either a satisfied or dissatisfied state about the product/service based on their a priori expectations about that particular consumption experience. Bearden and Teel (1983) explain the relationship between expectations and complaining behaviours using Oliver’s (1980) confirmation/disconfirmation paradigm. In this context, they show that expectations and disconfirmation are plausible determinants of satisfaction (Bearden and Teel, 1983). As long as the consumption experience is at least at the same level as expectations, consumers should be satisfied, but if their expectations are not

fulfilled by the actual experience, they feel dissatisfaction and this might lead to complaining (Bearden and Teel, 1983; Blodgett et al., 1993).

However, it should also be noted that dissatisfaction does not always lead to active and visible complaining behaviours (Day et al., 1981; Mulcahy and Tritter, 1998; Cri , 2003). Some consumers reflect their dissatisfaction with non-behavioural responses. Hence, non-complaining should not be regarded as an indication of consumer satisfaction. Non-behavioural responses are also legitimate complaining behaviours.

3.2.1.2. Sources of Dissatisfaction

CCB literature has discussed how dissatisfaction can be prompted by general negative feelings towards a company or particular attributes of a consumption experience, mainly around product and service failures. However, the focus of dissatisfaction may not always or necessarily be on the product/service itself; it can also be concerned with the manufacturer, retailer, sales person, delivery, or even the advertisement of the product (Day and Landon, 1977). In some cases, the consumers could even complain when there is no purchase involved. For instance Diamond et al. (1976) show that not all consumer complaints to company hotlines are related to product performance with consumers frequently complaining about advertisements and pricing policies. The source of the dissatisfaction is not always the fault of the manufacturer of the product or the service provider; dissatisfaction can occur because of consumers themselves (e.g. inability to use a product's specific functions) or other external factors that cannot be controlled by the companies (e.g. adverse weather conditions) (Jacoby and Jaccard, 1981). Hence, the source of CCB is a complex function of many variables together with product/service failure (Jacoby and Jaccard, 1981). To sum up, dissatisfaction due to solely product/service failure is not enough to explain consumers' intentions to complain (Bearden and Teel, 1983), and any part of the consumption experience might

influence CCB (Richins and Verhage, 1985; Maute and Forrester, 1993; Bodey and Grace, 2007).

3.2.1.3. Action Types

Past research on CCB has mostly focused on the type of final complaining action that consumers engage in, such as shifting patronage, negative WOM or complaining to third-party organisations (Day et al., 1981; Bearden and Teel, 1983; Richins, 1987; Halstead and Dröge, 1991). This diversity in complaining behaviours has led to different typologies that explain final complaining actions. Although there are different classifications, which will be examined fully in Section 3.3, complaining actions can be grouped into two basic areas as ‘non-behavioural’ and ‘behavioural responses’, as suggested by Singh (1988). Any action that conveys dissatisfaction towards the company (e.g. manufacturer, seller, retailer, service provider), third-parties (e.g. legal actions, consumerist organisations) or friends and family is a behavioural response (Singh, 1988). Since complaining consumers are not the only dissatisfied consumers (Warland et al., 1975), a non-behavioural response also defines a legitimate complaining action as an outcome of the consumption experience (Day et al., 1981).

Therefore, in this study, CCB is defined as consumers’ responses to a **dissatisfaction** regarding **to any part of the consumption experience**, which may contain a combination of a variety of **behavioural and/or non-behavioural actions**. The process of complaining can be comprised of a single complaining action or several actions simultaneously or sequentially.

3.2.2. Objectives of CCB

Consumers’ objectives when complaining are varied. Stauss and Seidel (2004) investigated complaints directed to companies and summarised consumers’ objectives as: (1) making the

company aware of the problem, (2) requesting compensation, and/or (3) making a change when there is a problem. For their study about the relationship between emotions and negative WOM behaviours, Wetzer et al. (2007) investigated consumer-to-consumer complaining behaviours. They reviewed literature on CCB, negative WOM and social sharing, and identified eight basic goals for negative WOM communications: comfort search, venting, advice search, bonding, entertaining, self-presentation, warning, revenge (Wetzer et al., 2007). These two studies show a range of objectives that consumers have when they engage in complaining activities. Some of these objectives overlap, while others have distinctive characteristics. This suggests that consumers might have the same objective when they engage in different complaining actions, or different objectives for the same complaining action.

3.2.3. Importance of CCB

As CCB is part of the consumption experience, it requires attention and investigation from academics and professionals. Complaints are indications of problems which can be solved when/if they are known by companies. In this sense, CCB should be regarded as feedback that can lead to a second chance for the company. With the help of consumer feedback, companies can correct problems and improve the quality of existing products/services and can turn dissatisfied customers into satisfied ones (Hart et al., 1990; Tax et al., 1998; Bodey and Grace, 2006). Studies have shown that once dissatisfied consumers are turned into satisfied ones, they are more loyal and valuable to companies (Fornell and Wernerfelt, 1987; Blodgett and Anderson, 2000). Companies can also use complaint handling management to protect their business from the potential damage of negative WOM. Effective complaint handling can secure the reputation of a business and create positive WOM (Richins and Verhage, 1985; Shields, 2006). Furthermore, complaint management strategies that aim to keep customers satisfied are cheaper than acquiring new customers in the long term (Fornell and Wernerfelt,

1987). Finally, advances in communication technologies also increase the importance of CCB: online shopping tools increase competition for offline retailers, and online discussion forums have created new ways to complain that can reach millions of other consumers easily. Hence, the importance of CCB research becomes more prominent with the change in the markets.

3.3. Typology of CCB

CCBs include a variety of responses to dissatisfaction ranging from negative WOM to switching to other products or taking no action at all. Researchers have used different classifications and typologies to analyse and organise these responses in order to conceptualise CCB. Although there is not a widely accepted typology of consumer's complaining actions, Day and Landon's (1977) dichotomy and Singh's (1988) taxonomy are commonly used for classifying CCB (e.g. Broadbridge and Marshall, 1995; Singh and Wilkes, 1996; Harrison-Walker, 2001; Fox, 2008; Velázquez et al., 2010; de Matos et al., 2011). As well as these, three other influential frameworks, namely Hirschman's (1970) theory of exit, voice and loyalty, Day et al.'s (1981) conceptualisation, and Crié's (2003) diachronic approach are investigated in the following subsections.

3.3.1. Hirschman's (1970) Theory of Exit, Voice and Loyalty

Hirschman's (1970) microeconomic approach of 'exit, voice and loyalty' is a seminal work on CCB. Exit represents the option of abandoning the object of dissatisfaction (e.g. product, brand, retailer, or supplier) and voice signifies the option of expressing negative feelings to the company. The third element, loyalty, is a special attachment to the company which works as a means to balance exit and voice and as a recuperation mechanism for failing businesses (Hirschman, 1970). Exit and voice are both active responses, because consumers engage in a

certain kind of action rather than standing silent. Loyalty, on the other hand, represents a passive and silent response.

As an economic response to dissatisfaction, exit is a damaging and indirect action. The consumer abandons the company because of dissatisfaction regarding a perceived failure, but does not provide the necessary information that may help to improve or solve the problem. Voice, on the other hand, is an informative, constructive and direct response. The consumer provides an opportunity for the company to fix the problem or improve the situation by addressing the issues directly to the company (Hirschman, 1970). Nevertheless, both exit and voice are powerful actions and might cause revenue loss for companies.

Hirschman (1970) also explains why some customers voice their complaints while others exit and switch to other companies. Both exit and voice involve economic and/or psychological costs for consumers such as switching costs and the opportunity cost of time and effort (Day et al., 1981). The choice between exit or voice mostly depends on situational factors and market structures that determine the availability of exit and benefits of voice (Hirschman, 1970). The greater the availability of exit (e.g. lower exit barriers) the less likely that voice happens: consumers who are sensitive to dissatisfaction would exit and the remaining ones would not voice their complaints. The presence of loyalty decreases the likelihood of exit, and increases the likelihood of voice (Hirschman, 1970), as consumers with an attachment to the company would hope and search for improvement instead of abandoning it. These consumers would have faith in the company to show an improvement in the future, and believe that it is worthwhile to wait. In this way, loyalty helps to balance the amounts of voice and exit a company receives. Other factors affecting the choice between voice and exit are identified as the importance of the product and the purchase, consumers' perceptions about the likely effectiveness of complaining, and consumers' attitudes towards complaining by Hirschman

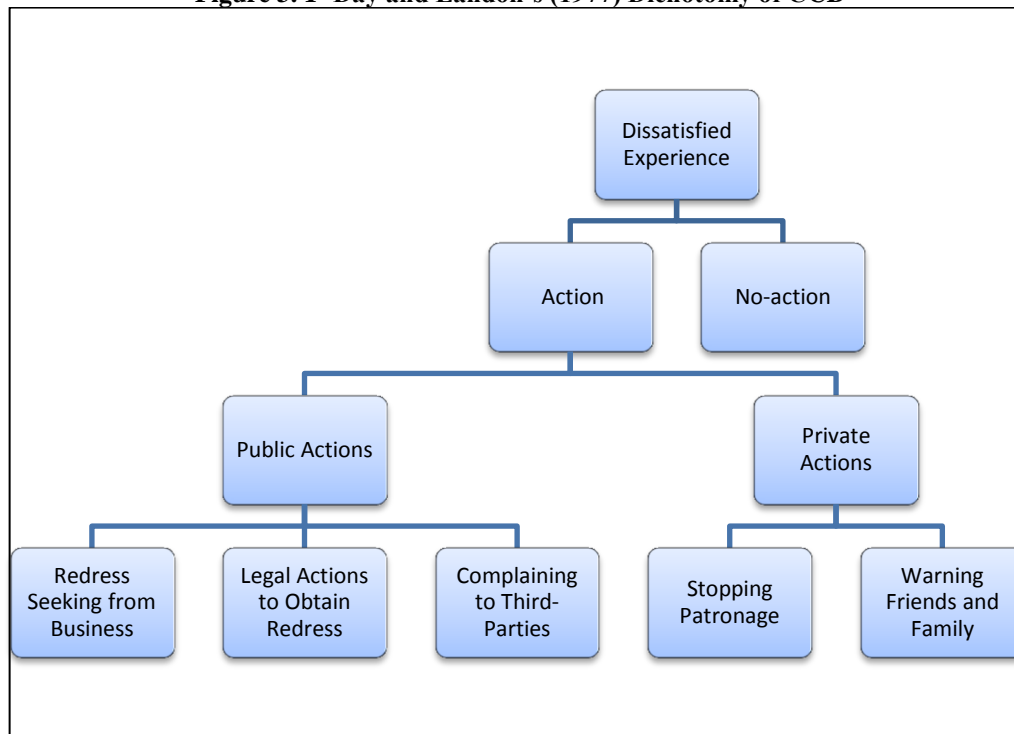
(1970). In this context, when consumers perceive the product and/or purchase as important one, when they believe the likelihood of their complaint succeeding is high, and when they have positive attitudes towards complaining, they are more likely to voice their complaints rather than exiting from the company. However, if voice is not successful, then exit is likely to follow.

Hirschman's (1970) framework is accepted as one of the most important works on CCB, and has been extensively used to explain consumer responses to dissatisfaction. It is especially useful to analyse these actions in economic contexts. Hirschman (1970) is widely cited not only in consumer behaviour studies, but also in other dissatisfaction-related fields (e.g. personal relationships or political organisations) (e.g. Farrell and Petersen, 1982; Andreasen, 1985; Maute and Forrester, 1993; Stewart, 1998; Ping, 2003). However, later CCB studies have usually excluded the loyalty concept, and criticised Hirschman's theory for using simplified response types, which are also not always directly observable (e.g. Singh, 1990).

3.3.2. Day and Landon's (1977) Dichotomy

Day and Landon's (1977) dichotomy of complaining responses is also widely used in CCB literature (e.g. Bearden and Teel, 1983; Harrison-Walker, 2001; Mattila and Wirtz, 2004; Donoghue and de Klerk, 2009). It is based on the assumption that the consumer's decision to complain is an outcome of the relationship between dissatisfaction level, importance of the purchase, perceived benefit from complaining and personality of the consumer. In this model, when consumers are dissatisfied, first they have to decide between 'taking an action' and 'no-action'. This model later distinguishes complaining actions as 'private actions' and 'public actions' (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3. 1- Day and Landon's (1977) Dichotomy of CCB



Source: Landon and Day (1977)

In Landon and Day's (1977) model, 'no-action' signifies silent responses that do not include a visible act. In this case, consumers still feel dissatisfaction, but this is either suppressed (Day and Landon, 1977) or denied (Olshavsky, 1977) in a way that it does not have any effect on the consumer's future behaviours. Best and Andreasen (1977) found that more than half of customers who experience problems do not voice their complaints. Even when consumers continue to patronise a company with no visible complaining action, 'no-action' is considered a legitimate CCB response by many academics (e.g. Day and Landon, 1977; Singh, 1988). This is similar to Hirschman's loyalty concept. In both cases, consumers are not satisfied with the business, but they do not show their dissatisfaction to the company, and continue to patronise it. However, in Hirschman's model, loyalty is not considered as a complaining action, but is a factor used to explain the choice between two other CCB actions.

Landon and Day's (1977) 'action' defines active complaining behaviours that consumers engage in, such as directly addressing the company (e.g. manufacturer, seller, retailer, service

provider), or third-parties (e.g. newspapers, legal institutions), and even friends and family. Active complaining responses to dissatisfaction are divided into 'private actions' and 'public actions'. Private actions are activities that are not directly visible to the company, whereas public actions are visible (Day and Landon, 1977). Consumers' choices between private and public actions might be based on the nature and importance of the product/service. For example, consumers are more likely to engage in public actions regarding expensive and durable products (Day and Landon, 1977; Blodgett et al., 1993; Levesque and McDougall, 1996). On the other hand, when consumers want to solve their problem in a personal or private way, they might prefer to engage in private actions. These consumers may stop their patronage or participate in negative WOM activities (Day and Landon, 1977). In Day and Landon's model 'stopping patronage' is the same as Hirschman's 'exit'. It is again a kind of personal boycott of the product/service by ending the relationship with the company. The second private response, negative WOM, happens when consumers talk about the unsatisfactory experience with their friends and family. Since private actions are not directly visible to the company, managers cannot know the details, the frequency or the extent of customer dissatisfaction. Although managers might realise that there could be problems, the impact of private actions on profits cannot be directly measured. Hence, some companies might underestimate their impact, and unsolved problems may lead to more dissatisfied customers in the long term (Day et al., 1981).

When consumers take a public action; they have three options: (1) seeking redress from the business, (2) taking legal action, and (3) complaining to third-party organisations such as private or governmental consumer agencies (Day and Landon, 1977). In the first situation, customers express their dissatisfaction directly to the company. They might seek redress (i.e. a kind of compensation or an apology) or aim to improve the company's operations. The other

two options- taking legal action and complaining to the third-party organisations- are called ‘indirect public action’ (Day and Landon, 1977). These activities include complaints to third-parties such as the media, legal institutions and consumer organisations, with or without aiming to obtain redress. The decision between one of these responses depends on various factors including the type of problem, nature of the product/service and perceptions of the company and justice (e.g. Blodgett et al., 1993; Broadbridge and Marshall, 1995).

3.3.3. Day et al.’s (1981) Conceptualisation

Unlike Hirschman’s (1970) and Day and Landon’s (1977) classifications of complaining activities, Day et al. (1981) list possible CCB responses in order to provide a comprehensive set of complaining actions (Table 3.1).

Table 3. 1- Day et al.’s (1981) List of CCB Actions

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does nothing. Makes no change whatever in subsequent behaviour as a result of unsatisfactory experience. 2. Personally boycotts the product class. Chooses to quit using that kind of product. 3. Personally boycotts that brand. Chooses to use other brands. 4. Personally boycotts the seller. Discontinues patronage of the retailer or direct marketing firm from which the purchase was made. 5. Privately complains (adverse WOM). Tells family, friends, and acquaintances of the bad experience and warns against using that store, brand or type of product or service. 6. Seeks redress directly from the seller: specific remedy such as replacement of the item, refund or other financial adjustment or free repairs. 7. Seeks redress directly from the manufacturer. 8. Seeks redress through some third party. Joins consumer advocate, consumer protection agency or the courts to seek redress. 9. Complains publicly, using any communications of a public nature for reasons other than seeking redress such as to influence future actions of retailers and/or manufacturers to influence legislation or seek action by regulatory agencies to seek action by consumer advocates, to warn the public or “just to get it off my chest.” |
|---|

Source: Day et al. (1981:88)

Day et al. (1981) explained their set of complaining actions as the following: after an unpleasant experience, dissatisfied consumers first need to decide between complaining and non-complaining (i.e. ‘staying silent’, Table 3.1, Item 1). Consumers who decide to take

action then need to decide which complaining action to take (Table 3.1, Items 2-9). These decisions are based on the consumer's assessment of costs and benefits, the probability of the success of the complaint, market conditions, and legal climate.

Day et al. (1981) treat complaining actions as individual elements of a nine-item list rather than a model of different distinctions and routes. However, they suggest that CCB is a sequential decision-making process which starts with the decision whether to make a complaint, continues with choosing one of the other eight elements and, if the dissatisfaction still exists, ends with a potential third step which engages in another complaining action again. Therefore, although these are separate activities, consumers can choose more than one of the eight items in the list (Day et al., 1981).

Day et al. (1981) suggest that a high level of dissatisfaction causes consumers to consider complaining, but dissatisfaction itself is not always enough for consumers to complain. Consequently, potential feedback from dissatisfied but non-complaining customers might get lost. In this respect, the most serious dissatisfaction responses for a company are 'personal boycott' and 'private complaining' (negative WOM). Furthermore, these actions usually do not require much effort from the dissatisfied consumer, but the combined impact from all dissatisfied consumers might have significant effects on the company's profits and reputation (Day et al., 1981).

3.3.4. Singh's (1988) Taxonomy

Singh (1988) extended Day and Landon's (1977) deductive two-dimensional model into a three-dimensional taxonomy on an empirical basis by using data from four consumer complaining situations (medical care, grocery stores, automobile repair and banking). Aiming to provide a structure for CCB, he investigated whether the data were consistent with existing

CCB classifications. The empirical findings indicated that prior classifications did not adequately represent the data, and he proposed his three-dimensional model (Singh, 1988).

In his framework, Singh (1988) proposes using the specific characteristics of what he refers to as the 'object' of each complaining action (e.g. family/friends, third-parties) rather than the complaining activity itself. In this way, he hoped that the characteristics of the object could help to identify particular conditions of each complaining situation. The two characteristics Singh (1988) suggested using are (1) objects' involvement in the dissatisfying experience (i.e. involved/not involved), and (2) consumers' relation with the object (i.e. external/not external).

In a complaining case, if the object of the action is directly related to the source of the problem, it is regarded as an 'involved' object (e.g. engaging in a complaining activity that involves the company). If the object of the complaining action is not directly related to the dissatisfying exchange, it is considered as 'not involved' (e.g. engaging in a complaining activity that involves friends and family). 'External' defines objects that are not part of the consumer's close circle of relationships (e.g. media and legal agencies), and 'not external' represents the consumers' social circle of informal relationships (e.g. friends and family). For example, when a consumer complains directly to a company for redress seeking, the object of the action is the company. Since the company is directly related with the dissatisfactory experience, it is an involved object, but it is not part of the consumer's circle of friends and family, so it is also external.

Using these characteristics, Singh (1988) then categorises complaining responses into three distinct actions: 'voice', 'third-party', and 'private actions'. Singh's voice responses represent complaining activities with objects that are external and are directly involved in the dissatisfying exchange (e.g. redress seeking, no-action). Third-party responses represent

external but not involved objects (e.g. legal actions, third-parties), and lastly private responses represent not external objects that are also not directly involved in the dissatisfying exchange (e.g. negative WOM). Table 3.2 was designed to show Singh's taxonomy in a matrix form.

Table 3. 2-Singh's Taxonomy of CCB (1988)

	External	Not external
Involved	Voice Responses	---
Not Involved	Third-Party Responses	Private Responses

Based on: Singh (1988)

Singh (1988) suggests that using the characteristics of the complaining objects helps to form an unambiguous categorisation of CCB. He claimed that it would be possible to use this categorisation as a guideline for discriminating and classifying all complaining actions. However, it is possible to interpret characteristics of objectives differently, and this may lead to disagreements about categorisation of complaining behaviours. For example, Singh (1988) categorised 'intention not to re-purchase' (i.e. exit) under his 'private responses' category, claiming that this is a 'not external' and 'not involved' situation. However, others might believe that exiting from a company reflects feelings towards the seller, which is actually external to the customer's social circle. Also others could relate exit to the consumers' initial purchase, which represents direct involvement by the company. Therefore 'intention not to re-purchase' could also be classified as a 'voice' response according to Singh taxonomy (1988). Maute and Forrester (1993) also criticised Singh's theory because of this problem. They stated that as Singh considers the characteristics of the object instead of the action itself, contradictory classifications could emerge in several dimensions of CCB (Maute and Forrester, 1993).

3.3.5. Crié's (2003) Diachronic Approach

A comprehensive classification of CCB was made by Crié (2003). Crié (2003) suggests that the lack of a widely accepted systematic classification of CCB is a result of the consideration of CCB as a one-point action rather than as a diachronic process. Crié (2003) adopts Day and Landon's (1977) two-dimensional model of 'action' and 'no-action' as the initial reaction for dissatisfaction, and also distinguishes final actions into 'public' and 'private' actions. However, he suggests that consumers may mix and connect different types of response instead of adopting only one (Crié, 2003). Therefore, complaining activities should not be regarded as individual actions, but should be considered as a process of sequence, and interaction of different variables.

Crié (2003) suggested that complaining actions could only partially be explained by the dissatisfaction and nature of the product/service, because CCB "is the outcome of a process of preliminary evaluations under the influence of initiating and modulating factors" (Crié, 2003:65). According to this, initiating factors introduce and determine the type of response to dissatisfaction, and modulating factors intervene and modify the consumer's initial response to a final state. Therefore, intention to complain does not necessarily occur at the same time as dissatisfaction is felt, but is an outcome of various initiating and modulating factors. This outcome can be the result of a short or long path that consumers can employ. The short path is immediate and less influenced by modulating factors, but the long path is an extended process and has more modulating factors (Crié, 2003). When CCB is an outcome of a short path and is affected mostly by initiating factors, Crié (2003) suggests that these factors should be more situational. Similarly when CCB is compromised by long paths, then numerous other variables can intervene and modify the final response. Crié's (2003) inductive study extends the CCB concept by emphasising the importance of the process and the factors, both initiating

and modulating, that affect the final actions. However, this approach suffers from a lack of empirical validation, and a clear outline of classification for the end responses.

3.4. Evaluation of CCB Models

In order to understand and explain CCB, researchers have applied different approaches to develop coherent frameworks (Maute and Forrester, 1993; Cri  , 2003). At first glance, there seems to be significant differences between these frameworks because of the lack of consensus about the structuring and systematisation of complaint responses, but they also have similarities. The next subsections present a review of the existing models, their differences, and the overlapping and conflicting elements in order to develop an overall model that integrates existing models.

3.4.1. Review of Existing Models

Being one of the earliest studies about the responses and impacts of dissatisfaction, Hirschman's (1970) theory of exit, voice and loyalty, is the predecessor of the other CCB models. Hirschman (1970) essentially states that consumers have two options to show their dissatisfaction; 'exit' or 'voice', and explains the interplay of these two options with a third factor; 'loyalty'. Day and Landon (1977) and Day et al. (1981) have tried to extend Hirschman's classification believing that a sole discrimination of exit and voice does not fully explain the complexity of various types of dissatisfaction response. For that purpose, their restructuring expands the variety of complaining responses. Both models suggest that the first reaction to dissatisfaction is to decide whether to take an action. After this first step, Day and Landon's (1977) dichotomy distinguishes consumer actions according to their visibility to the company in a two-dimensional way: if the action is visible to or identifiable by the company, it is a public action; and if not, it is a private action (Figure 3.1). On the other hand, Day et al.

(1981) treat each response as an individual action unaffiliated with other responses (Table 3.1). However, some elements of Day et al.'s (1981) list still emphasise private and public features of actions (e.g. Table 3.1- Items 5 and 9). Furthermore, Day et al.'s (1981) model is the only one that considers different aspects of personal boycott (exit): boycotting the product itself, boycotting the brand and boycotting the retailer (Table 3.1- Items 2, 3 and 4). These early models were deductivist, and mainly based on definitions and explanations of consumer actions. Later, Singh (1988) used inductive techniques with empirical data. In his study about definitional and taxonomic issues of CCB, he points out the complexity of existing conceptualisations, suggesting that these models do not follow similar rules or show an unambiguous schema (Singh, 1988). In order to resolve this problem, he used empirical data, and proposed to use characteristics of the object towards which complaining actions are directed (being external/not external and involved/not involved) for taxonomical purposes. Lastly, aiming to touch upon a broader aspect of CCB, Crié's diachronic approach (2003) suggests that CCB is an outcome of the interaction of various situational and temporal factors, and uses an inductive approach to investigate the interaction and sequence of these factors. Crié (2003) also embraces Day and Landon's (1977) discriminations of action/no-action and public/private for final CCB actions. However, he indicates that the variability of these responses can only be partially explained by the differences in dissatisfaction and the nature of the product/service. As variability is essentially an outcome of different processes, he defines CCB as one of two paths- short and long- according to the factors affecting the process. Although Crié's approach (2003) helps to identify and integrate the various factors that affect complaining actions, it does not outline a clear categorisation of the types of complaining action.

3.4.2. Differences between Models

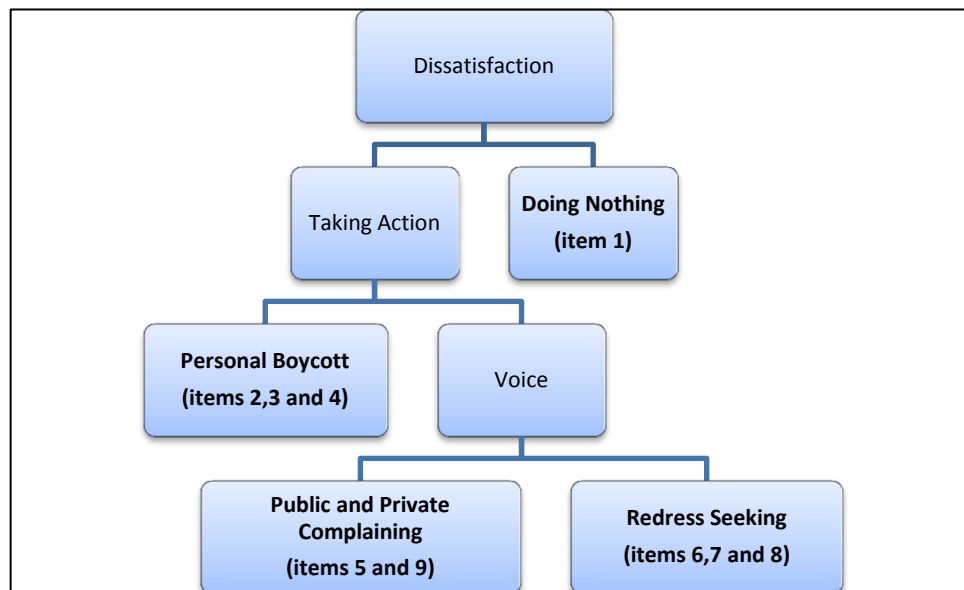
There are three main reasons for the differences among CCB frameworks. First, different methods are used for discrimination purposes. For example, Day and Landon (1977) distinguish complaining actions according to their visibility to the business as ‘public’ and ‘private’ actions, while Singh (1988) argues that a classification using the characteristics of the object of the action might lead to a more unambiguous categorisation, and grouped CCB actions into three- voice, private and third-party-. Ultimately, both Day and Landon (1977) and Singh (1988) have a category called ‘private’. However, these two categories represent different types of responses due to different classification approaches.

Second, the models define the same, or slightly different, actions by different names (e.g. exit, stop patronage, leaving, abandoning, and personally boycott), mostly because they have emphasised different characteristics of action types. For example, Hirschman (1970) suggests that consumers might choose to do nothing about a dissatisfactory experience because of their perceived relationship with the business. Therefore, he classified this sort of action as ‘loyalty’. However, Day and Landon’s dichotomy (1977) justify non-behavioural response by personal circumstances of consumers, such as ignoring or overlooking the bad experience, and define it as ‘no-action’.

Finally, Day et al. (1981) prefers to present a list of complaining activities instead of categorising them into groups, because of their understanding of complaining actions being separate activities. However, it is also possible to group the items in this list according to action type. As this sort of a categorisation might be useful to identify similar and conflicting concepts, this study designed Figure 3.2 which shows a visual representation of Day et al. (1981) categorisation. Apart from the first item, ‘doing nothing’, Day et al.’s (1981) list has three types of action: personal boycotts (Table 3.1- Items 2, 3 and 4), complaining (Table 3.1-

Items 5 and 9), and redress seeking (Table 3.1- Items 6, 7 and 8). Personal boycotts are about discontinuing patronage of the product, brand or retailer. The other two- complaining and redress seeking- are about communicating dissatisfaction. Hence, they could be grouped in a category similar to Hirschman's 'voice'. However, since they have different objectives, these also should be separated into two: 'complaining for seeking redress' and 'complaining for other reasons'. To sum up, even though Day et al. (1981) lists available complaining actions instead of making a categorisation, the nine elements in their list could be distinguished between 'taking action' and 'doing nothing' as the first level and then 'personal boycott' and 'voice' as the second level. Lastly, 'voice' category can be separated according to the purpose of complaint into 'public and private complaining' and 'redress seeking' (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3. 2- Visual Representation of Day et al.'s (1981) CCB Actions



Based on: Day et al. (1981)

3.4.3. Overlapping and Conflicting Concepts

These differences in the classifications have resulted in a lack of a consensus about final actions of CCB, and have created overlapping and conflicting concepts. Three main overlapping and conflicting concepts have been identified.

All models discuss the case of ‘not doing anything’ regarding a dissatisfying experience, although they define it with different names (e.g. no-action, doing nothing, staying silent, non-behavioural response), and explain the motivations differently (e.g. forgetting or forgiving). The decision between ‘action’ and ‘no-action’ is usually identified as the first step of the complaining process after dissatisfaction, except in the case of Hirschman (1970). Day and Landon (1977) suggested classifying ‘no-action’ as a legitimate CCB, noting that a substantial portion of dissatisfied customers do not take action. This was also accepted by later researchers (i.e. Singh, 1988; Cri , 2003). However, Hirschman’s theory (1970) investigated this concept through loyalty as the key factor influencing the options of voice and exit. Loyal consumers would stay without doing anything, expecting to see improvement. Therefore, staying silent towards the company was regarded as being loyal rather than a response denoting dissatisfaction. In this context, Hirschman’s theory identifies this action without any negative dimension, unlike newer models which design ‘no-action’ as a complaining activity.

Another conflicting element among the CCB models is the classification of activities that involve consumers’ communicating their problems. Hirschman (1970) considers all types of communications addressed to business following a dissatisfying experience as ‘voice’, regardless of the facets of the complaint. However, other frameworks distinguish this type of communication based on their characteristics, such as type of respondent (e.g. company, third-parties or friends) or the aim of the complaint (e.g. redress seeking or warning others). For example, in Day and Landon’s (1977) dichotomy, voicing complaints to friends and family is considered a private response whereas voicing complaints expecting redress is considered a public response. Singh (1988) also names one of his categories ‘voice’ which consists of ‘external’ and ‘involved’ objects such as redress seeking. Therefore, Singh’s voice

category excludes WOM activities and legal actions, and includes only direct communication with the company.

The terms ‘public’ and ‘private’ represent overlapping concepts among the CCB theories. Day and Landon (1977) discriminate consumers’ actions based on their visibility to the company. According to them, actions that are not visible to the company are ‘private’ complaining activities because they are limited to the consumers’ close circle of friends and family. Crié (2003) directly adopts the same classification, and Day et al. (1981) use these terms with the same meanings in their list of complaining activities (Table 3.1- Items 5 and 9). However, Singh (1988) defines ‘private actions’ based on the characteristics of the object. When the object is not external to the complainer’s social circle and when the action is not directly involved with the dissatisfying experience, they are called private actions. Nevertheless, one of Singh’s examples for the private actions category is the same as Day and Landon’s (1977) example for their private actions category, which is negative WOM. Therefore, even though Singh (1988) contends that he uses this label in a different context, his category of private responses still carries some similar characteristics to Day and Landon’s (1977) private actions.

3.4.4. An Integrated Model of CCB

The previous studies on the typology and structuring of complaining behaviours have failed to identify one valid typology for all complaining situations for the reasons discussed above. These frameworks are integrated into a generalised model for the purposes of this study. This section presents the development of an integrated model of existing CCB theories: ‘Integrated Model of CCB’.

Day and Landon’s (1977) ‘action/no-action’ discrimination is based on the decision of the consumer whether to respond to the dissatisfactory situation with a behavioural action. This

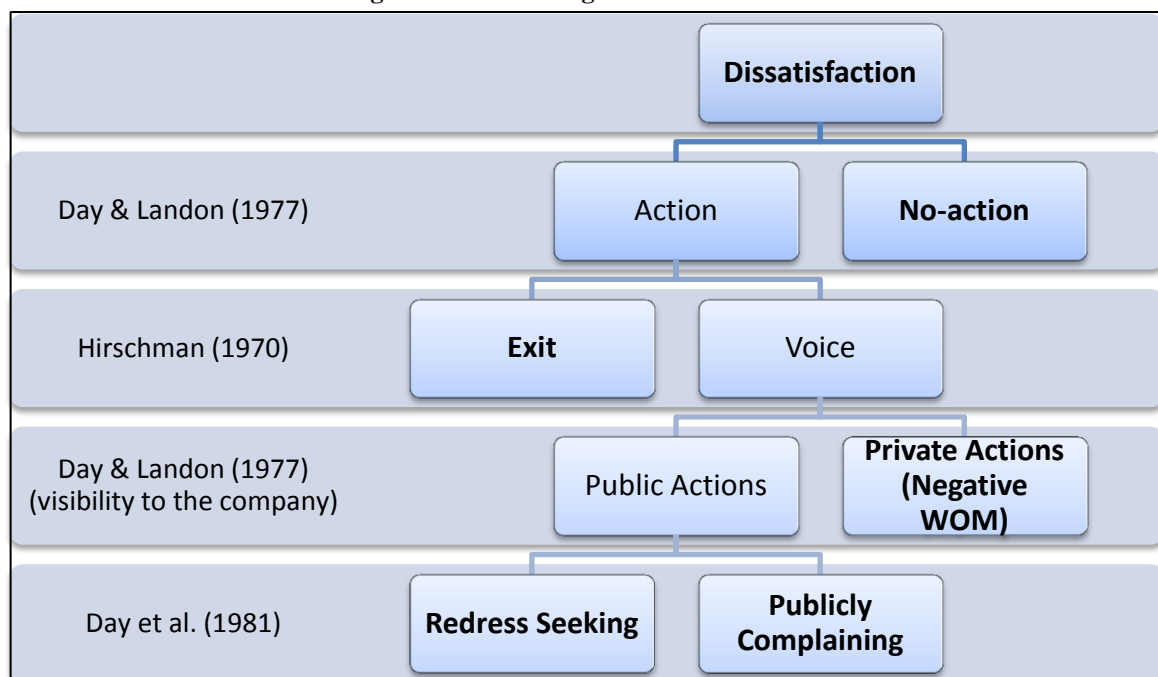
discrimination is accepted by most of the models (Day and Landon, 1977; Day et al., 1981; Cri , 2003), and forms the first step of ‘Integrated Model of CCB’. After this first step, the most basic distinction of complaining actions is the type of action: exit- or voice-based. As in Hirschman’s (1970) theory, consumers prefer to act in a particular way about a dissatisfactory experience; either with exit, that is abandoning the responsible party (e.g. retailer, manufacturer or brand) or with voice, that is communicating their dissatisfaction. Since communicating the complaint could involve different channels or target different audiences, studies have classified these actions using the characteristics of the entity towards which the complaining is directed (Day and Landon, 1977; Singh, 1988) or the aim of the complaint (Day et al., 1981). Singh’s (1988) classification of external/not external and involved/not involved objects does not always bring definite conclusions for every type of situation (see Section 3.3.4), and Day et al.’s (1981) purposes for complaining actions do not consider every possible action. Therefore, Day and Landon’s (1977) visibility of the complaining action to the company (i.e. public or private), is used for the third level classification of the ‘Integrated Model of CCB’: ‘private actions’ represent complaining activities towards friends and family (i.e. negative WOM) and ‘public responses’ represent complaining activities identifiable by the company which may or may not be aimed at obtaining redress. Complaining actions that do not seek redress could aim to influence the future actions of companies, legislation or to warn the public (Day et al., 1981). Separation of these actions from the redress seeking behaviours is also needed, similar to Day et al.’s (1981) separation of redress seeking actions from other complaining actions.

Actions aiming to obtain redress do not always address the company; consumer protection agencies or legal institutions may also help consumers with this purpose. Similarly, consumers might address the company or other third-parties, such as media, when they

publicly complain for other reasons. Therefore, Singh's (1988) distinction between involved and not involved objects is applicable to both 'redress seeking' and 'publicly complaining'. However, these (e.g. redress seeking via third parties and redress seeking directly from the company) are not considered as different actions because in both cases, consumers essentially engage in the same activity (e.g. seeking redress). Therefore, two inferior alternatives of redress seeking and publicly complaining are considered as sub-categories, instead of final actions.

Figure 3.3 shows the Integrated Model of CCB. The final actions are determined based on the activity that consumers engage in. For example, private actions and exit are regarded differently from each other because consumers engage in different kinds of activity (i.e. warning friends and family and abandoning the company). The model shows five final actions in bold typeface: 'no-action', 'exit', 'private actions' (negative WOM), 'redress seeking', and 'publicly complaining'. The definitions of these actions are presented below.

Figure 3. 3- The Integrated Model of CCB



Developed using Hirschman (1970), Landon and Day (1977), and Day et al. (1981)

No-action: No-action as a response for dissatisfaction refers to non-behavioural complaining, when consumers do not engage in any active complaining activities to express their dissatisfaction. These consumers do not voice their complaints, and do not leave the company. They continue their patronage despite feeling dissatisfaction. Day and Landon (1976) found that 26.5% of their sample did not act regarding a dissatisfactory purchase experience with a nondurable product and 22.9% with a durable product. More recently, Siddiqui and Tripathi (2010) state that 61% of their respondents did not take action about their disappointment. Some of these consumers might not know how to complain or believe that it would not be worth complaining in particular situations.

Exit: Exit occurs when consumers permanently terminate their relationship with a company after having an unsatisfactory experience. This could involve stopping patronage of a product, service, brand or retailer. Since consumers abandon the company and do not provide information regarding their dissatisfaction, exit is considered one of the most harmful and serious complaining actions (Day et al., 1981). The CCB literature has explored exit behaviour suggesting a variety of terms such as stopping patronage, leaving, abandoning and personal boycott. In addition to these direct terms, switching is also used to describe exit from one company to start a new relationship with another (e.g. Keaveney, 1995; Roos et al., 2004).

Private Actions (Negative WOM): Some studies define private actions as the complaining behaviours that are not visible to or identifiable by companies (Singh, 1988; Crié, 2003). Since this definition includes activities that are not public or not directed to the company, it includes WOM communications and exit behaviours. However, the present study distinguishes complaining actions according to the main action (e.g. exit and voice), and then makes another separation by visibility to the company into public and private actions (Figure

3.3). In this way, exit and communication related responses are separated, and the term ‘private actions’ covers only negative WOM communications.

One of the most common definitions of WOM is “oral, person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, concerning a brand, a product or a service” (Arndt, 1967:3). When this communication is negative in nature, it is known as negative WOM and defined as consumer communications that denigrate, complain or advise against a product, service or organisation usually due to an unpleasant experience (Kimmel, 2010). This study defines negative WOM as voice responses regarding a dissatisfactory experience that involve only the social circle of a consumer (e.g. friends and family). Halstead (2002) found evidence that suggests negative WOM communications supplement complaining activities to the company, rather than being substitute for them. Other studies have suggested after engaging in complaining activities, consumers engage in less negative WOM (Nyer, 2000; Voorhees et al., 2006).

Publicly Complaining: When consumers engage in complaining activities in public without aiming to seek redress, this is considered ‘publicly complaining’. These activities could be complaining directly to the company or through third-parties such as media and governmental consumer agencies.

Redress Seeking: When consumers engage in complaining actions to obtain redress such as full or partial refund, replacement, free repairs, gifts and compensation for damages or injuries, these activities are regarded as redress seeking behaviours (Day and Landon, 1977). Like ‘publicly complaining’, redress seeking activities could be through the company itself or other third-party organisations. In some studies, these two types of redress seeking behaviours are separated (e.g. Singh, 1988). However, the present study discriminates public activities

according to the aim of the complaint rather than the channel of complaint. Therefore, both of these actions are investigated in one category.

This study also follows Cri  s (2003) suggestions, and does not treat final actions as separate and distinct activities. CCB is regarded as a network of activities rather than as a sequence of activities (Tronvoll, 2012). While complaining, consumers can display a variety of action types simultaneously, and the final actions are not always exclusive (Cri  , 2003). Therefore, consumers can engage with one or more of the five actions of Integrated Model of CCB simultaneously or sequentially. For example, a consumer can start with negative WOM and ‘publicly complaining’ through direct contact with the company simultaneously, and then can exit from the company, if the dissatisfaction continues.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter has described and reviewed previous studies about consumer complaining behaviours. After introducing the concepts and the justification of the study, five models that study the typology of CCB were presented. The evaluation of the models identified their overlapping and conflicting elements and revealed the need for a different model that covers the range of complaining options available to consumers. For this purpose, a model to integrate the existing models was developed: Integrated Model of CCB (Figure 3.3). This research aims to contribute to the literature by focusing on the five final actions from this model, namely no-action, exit, private actions (negative WOM), redress seeking, and ‘publicly complaining’ actions, in order to identify and explore the nature and manner of online complaining behaviours. Chapter 4 will present another important area of literature review: factors that influence complaining behaviours.

CHAPTER 4- LITERATURE REVIEW: FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER COMPLAINING BEHAVIOUR

4.1. Introduction

This chapter investigates factors influencing the five complaining actions of the Integrated Model of CCB which was developed in Chapter 3. Additional factors beyond dissatisfaction should be investigated in order to explain consumers' complaining choices (e.g. Halstead and Dröge, 1991; Fox, 2008). Complaining and dissatisfaction theories explain that dissatisfaction is a necessary condition for complaining actions to occur (e.g. Day, 1984), but it is not sufficient to explain the antecedents of CCB fully (e.g. Singh, 1990; Blodgett et al., 1993). Given that these additional factors help to explain why consumers complain in the way they do, it is important to explore these factors and their effects on the five complaining actions (i.e. no-action, exit, negative WOM, publicly complaining and redress seeking). This chapter aims to shed light on how these factors influence consumers' decisions to complain.

The chapter is organised as follows. Section 4.2 explains the categorisation of the factors influencing CCB adopted in this study. Organisational and situational factors are explored as separate entities in terms of their explanation of complaining actions in Sections 4.3 and 4.4. These sections look at the relationship of these factors with the five actions of the Integrated Model of CCB. Finally, Section 4.5 presents an evaluation of these to provide an overall understanding of their nature and relation to the five complaining actions.

4.2. Categorisation of the Factors Influencing CCB

This section explores different ways of categorising the factors influencing CCB. Since it has been discussed that dissatisfaction only partially explains variance in CCB (e.g. Richins, 1982;

Bearden and Teel, 1983), CCB literature has emphasised the need to explain the remaining factors influencing these behaviours (e.g. Cri , 2003; Donoghue and de Klerk, 2009).

The earlier works suggested two main factors to explain why consumers continue their relationship with the company: (1) consumers' perceptions of exiting and the likelihood of an improvement in the problems, and (2) consumers' perceptions about the effects of their complaints on the company (Hirschman, 1970). However, these alone are not enough to explain the antecedents of complaining actions. Later studies investigated a variety of factors in relation to different complaining actions (e.g. Richins, 1987; Broadbridge and Marshall, 1995; Chelminski and Coulter, 2007). For example, Day et al. (1981) argue that the decision to complain is based on consumers' economic and psychological cost/benefit comparisons, and Blodgett and Anderson (2000) suggest that complaining depends on a variety of factors, such as consumers' attitudes toward complaining, perceived justice, and likelihood of the success of the complaint. Other studies have tried to classify these factors into categories to aid the conceptual development of CCB. These classifications are mainly based on Day and Landon's (1977), Jacoby and Jaccard's (1981), Day et al.'s (1981), and Richins' (1987) CCB conceptualisations which have led to a separation of consumer, market/company and situational factors.

Consumer factors are the consumer-specific variables such as demographics, personality, attitudes towards complaining and culture. Market/company factors comprise characteristics of the market and company that influence CCB, such as consumers' perceptions about responsiveness, likelihood of the success of the complaint, consumers' attributions to the company and marketplace factors. Lastly, situational factors consider the particular characteristics of the dissatisfactory experience and the product/service. These include the degree of dissatisfaction, severity of the problem, perceived justice and characteristics of the

product/service. However, as Crié (2003) suggests, CCB is regarded as an outcome of the interplay of all of the factors, so this categorisation of different factors should not mean that these are independent processes.

Most CCB studies have used these three factors for categorisation purposes (e.g. Bearden and Mason, 1984; Maute and Forrester, 1993; Nasir, 2004; Donoghue and de Klerk, 2009). However, some researchers have applied minor changes to these categories due to the requirements of their studies (e.g. Halstead and Dröge, 1991). Therefore, it was decided to follow a similar approach in this study. Three-dimensional separation of consumer/personal characteristics, organisational factors and situational factors is used. However, consumer-specific factors are excluded as these are beyond the scope of this study because of the limitations with the selected methods (see Section 11.5).

Organisational and situational factors in relation to five final complaining actions are therefore the focus of this chapter, which discusses four organisational factors and four situational factors derived from the literature.

4.3. Organisational Factors

This section presents the four organisational factors influencing complaining actions from the Integrated Model of CCB. These are ‘perceived responsiveness of the company’, ‘perceived likelihood of success’, ‘consumers’ attributions to the company’, and ‘marketplace factors’.

4.3.1. Perceived Responsiveness of the Company

Consumers’ perceptions of the responsiveness of the company influence their complaining behaviour. These perceptions are shaped by variables such as the complexity of the complaints policy and procedures of the company (Mulcahy and Tritter, 1998), attitudes of

staff (Mulcahy and Tritter, 1998), and customers' previous consumption experience (Bolfing, 1989; Stephens and Gwinner, 1998). When customers think that the responsiveness of the company is low, they do not believe that their complaints will solve the problem. Hence, they do not believe that their effort to make the complaint will be worthwhile. This makes them reluctant to expend the effort to complain, and they may decide not to complain at all (i.e. no-action) (Voorhees and Brady, 2005; Voorhees et al., 2006). Moreover, negative impressions about a company's responsiveness may encourage consumers to exit (Richins, 1987) and engage in negative WOM (Richins, 1983; Bolfing, 1989), especially if consumers consider these as more constructive alternatives. In these cases, consumers might prefer to switch to alternatives, that they believe, provide satisfactory experiences, or they might prefer to engage in WOM to vent negative feelings, warn others, and get revenge on the company. In contrast, consumers' positive perceptions of the redress environment of the companies (e.g. high probability of achieving a successful outcome) increase 'publicly complaining' and redress seeking activities directed to the company (Day and Landon, 1977; Richins and Verhage, 1985; Bolfing, 1989; Halstead and Dröge, 1991).

4.3.2. Perceived Likelihood of Success

The perceived likelihood of success of the complaining activity refers to customers' perceptions about the outcome of the complaint. If consumers believe that the likelihood of the success of their complaint is low, they do not complain (i.e. no-action), or simply exit from the company (Day and Landon, 1976; Blodgett and Anderson, 2000). Moreover, if consumers do not expect to receive redress or cause an improvement in the company, they tend to engage in negative WOM (Blodgett et al., 1993; Blodgett et al., 1995). On the contrary, high likelihood of a success increases 'publicly complaining' and redress seeking through the company (Blodgett et al., 1995; Fox, 2008). One likely explanation for this is that

when consumers believe that the resolution of their complaints will be positive, they might prefer to expend effort to seek redress instead of engaging in negative WOM communications with other consumers.

4.3.3. Consumers' Attributions to the Company

Consumers' attributions help them to evaluate the extent to which product/service performance corresponds with the level of aspiration for that product/service, following a failure (Weiner, 2000). Attribution theory suggests that consumers' attribution of the dissatisfaction influences how they respond to that dissatisfaction (Folkes, 1984). That is, when customers blame a dissatisfactory experience on the company, the likelihood of complaining is greater (Krishnan and Valle, 1979; Blodgett et al., 1995). Therefore, one of the reasons for no-action is the consumer's belief that the company is not responsible for the source of the problem.

Folkes (1984) suggests that when customers blame the company because of a problem, they consider the problem in two dimensions: stability and controllability. Stability refers to the likelihood of the same problem happening in the future, and controllability refers to consumers' perception of the control the company has over the problem (Folkes, 1984). When consumers believe that a problem is stable and/or controllable, they tend to blame the company more, and this increases the likelihood of complaining. For example, Mulcahy and Tritter (1998) explain that when customers believe that the real reason for dissatisfaction is not the local service provider branch but the central management of an organisation, they might not tend to complain about their dissatisfaction at the branch. Moreover, when consumers believe the problem is stable and controllable by the company itself, the tendency to exit is higher (Richins, 1987; Blodgett et al., 1993; Blodgett et al., 1995). Also, these consumers believe that they deserve to receive redress (Blodgett et al., 1995). Therefore, such

attributions to the companies increase exit and redress seeking behaviours. Additionally, consumers who blame the company (external attributions of blame), rather than themselves (internal attributions of blame), are believed to be more likely to engage in negative WOM (Richins, 1983; Blodgett et al., 1995). However, another study by Blodgett (1993) found no significant effect of blame attributions of the company (i.e. controllability and stability) on negative WOM. Also, Zeelenberg and Pieters' (2004) findings indicate that in some cases customers engage in negative WOM even though they hold internal attributions of blame. Authors suggested that in these cases, consumers might regard negative WOM communications as social interaction tools for venting negative feelings and warning others. It seems that attributions to the company influence negative WOM in different ways. One likely reason is that consumers might have different purposes for engaging in negative WOM. For example, while consumers who blame the company can use negative WOM communications to warn others or seek revenge, for others who do not blame the company directly, these might operate as a venting mechanism.

4.3.4. Marketplace Factors

Marketplace factors such as exit barriers, degree of competition, availability and attractiveness of alternatives also influence consumers' decisions regarding complaining behaviour. Hirschman (1970) highlights the importance of market structures on CCB using a microeconomic approach. In this context, consumer reactions to dissatisfactory experiences vary with the degree of competition and availability of alternatives (Hirschman, 1970). In competitive markets, consumers' willingness to expend effort to both exit and voice will increase (Hirschman, 1970). These consumers can easily switch to other alternatives (i.e. exit), as a competitive market offers high availability and accessibility of alternatives (Maute and Forrester, 1993). In contrast, monopolistic market situations force customers to stay loyal due

to the lack of attractive alternatives (i.e. no-action) (Hirschman, 1970). In this case, consumers tend to voice their complaints publicly and not personally (i.e. complaining through third-parties and negative WOM) (Hirschman, 1970; Maute and Forrester, 1993). When consumers do not have the option to switch to other companies or when the switching costs are high, they tend to engage in more negative WOM communications (Jones et al., 2007; de Matos et al., 2011). Similarly, exit barriers also affect CCB by increasing the cost of terminating the relationship with the company. Exit barriers are financial, psychological or social barriers that increase the cost of switching. High exit barriers lead to a decrease in exit. In fact, exit barriers have been found to have the strongest and most consistent influence on complaining actions, compared with the attractiveness of alternatives and magnitude of dissatisfaction (Maute and Forrester, 1993). Since high exit barriers decrease the perceived worth of complaining for consumers, they cause no-action and negative WOM increase (Maute and Forrester, 1993; Roos et al., 2004).

4.4. Situational Factors

Four situational factors influencing the complaining actions derived from the literature are discussed in this section: ‘level of dissatisfaction’, ‘severity of the problem’, ‘perceived justice’, and ‘type of product and problem’.

4.4.1. Level of Dissatisfaction and Severity of the Problem

Level of dissatisfaction and severity of the problem have been found to be positively related to complaining behaviour and negatively related to repurchase intentions (e.g. Richins, 1983; Richins and Verhage, 1985). Since severe dissatisfaction carries higher threats to consumers’ interests, their willingness to extend effort increases. Therefore the likelihood of ‘publicly complaining’, negative WOM and exit increases (Richins, 1987; Bolting, 1989; Maute and

Forrester, 1993; Mattila, 2001). Blodgett and Anderson (2000) also point out that after multiple dissatisfying experiences, the magnitude of the dissatisfaction may be greater, and this might lead more consumers to exit. On the other hand, low levels of satisfaction were found to have higher negative influence on the intention to complain through third-parties, followed by negative WOM and directly complaining to the company (de Matos and Leis, 2012). The form of the relationship between intensity of dissatisfaction and engaging in different types of complaining actions has also been investigated (Singh and Pandya, 1991). This study found that after dissatisfaction intensity exceeded a certain threshold, consumers' engagement with exit and negative WOM increased substantially. In particular, when dissatisfaction levels are low, less than 35% of their sample reported engaging in exit or negative WOM activities, but when the dissatisfaction level reached the highest category, 56% of the sample engaged in these activities. However, the relationship between dissatisfaction and engaging in voice actions- publicly complaining and redress seeking- was found to be linear (Singh and Pandya, 1991). It seems that as consumers' dissatisfaction level increases, they are more likely to voice, but the likelihood of exit and negative WOM increases substantially only after a threshold level. It is possible that consumers might not want to expend effort to engage in exit and WOM when they do not feel high levels of dissatisfaction.

Problem severity is one of the crucial determinants of the effort that customers are willing to expend following an unsatisfactory experience. It is believed to increase negative WOM (Richins, 1983; Richins, 1987; Fox, 2008; de Matos and Leis, 2012): the greater the severity of the problem, the more likely consumers are to engage in negative WOM activities. Also, in the case of severe failures, consumers are more willing to expend effort complaining. Thus, they are more likely to voice publicly (Bolting, 1989), and seek redress when they consider

the problems are severe (Richins and Verhage, 1985). However, it should also be noted that individuals might perceive different levels of severity after the same or similar failures (Mattila, 2001).

4.4.2. Perceived Justice

Perceived justice refers to the level of perceived fairness by consumers during their transactions with the company (Tax et al., 1998). As perceptions of justice in these cases vary, consumers might determine the fairness of their experiences differently in different situations. Hence, perceived justice is regarded as a situational factor in the present study. Perceived justice as a factor influencing CCB is mostly investigated in the literature in relation to complaint handling situations and service recovery. That is consumers' perceived fairness of the handling of a complaint. Tax et al. (1998) identify three dimensions of justice in these cases: distributive justice (i.e. fairness of outcome), procedural justice (i.e. fairness of process), and interactional justice (i.e. fairness of interpersonal behaviours). Distributive justice signifies the consumers' evaluations of balance between consumers' inputs- monetary as well as time and effort- and outcome (McCollough et al., 2000). Procedural and interactional justice on the other hand consider the aspects of fairness of the delivery of the outcome: procedural justice refers to the elements of the process such as company policies and speed, and interactional justice considers the treatment from the employees such as receiving an apology (Mattila, 2001).

Evidence suggests that absence of justice leads to consumers being angry, and more focused on solving the problem through negative WOM and exit behaviours (Blodgett et al., 1993; Blodgett et al., 1997). Notably, low levels of distributive and interactional justice decrease consumer satisfaction, especially in service recovery situations (McCollough et al., 2000; Mattila, 2001) and increase exit and negative WOM behaviours (Blodgett et al., 1997).

Therefore, when consumers experience a lack of justice due to the outcome of their complaint or the treatment by the employees, they are more likely to engage in exit and negative WOM activities. Also, Voorhess and Brandy (2005) demonstrate that interactional and distributive justice have a positive direct effect on future complaining intentions (i.e. voice and redress). Hence the presence of interactional and distributive justice in complaint handling situations leads consumers to complain to the company in the future.

4.4.3. Type of Product and Problems Encountered

Research on types of product and problems that lead to complaining actions revealed significant relationships with some complaining behaviours. Consumers' decisions regarding complaining are based on their assessments of costs and benefits. With less important products, the perceived total cost of complaining (e.g. time and effort to make the complaint) is likely to be less than the perceived benefits (e.g. a refund or compensation). Therefore, the tendency to act is higher for important and expensive products and services than for less important and inexpensive products (Day et al., 1981). The comparison of perceived total cost of complaining (i.e. the sum of the monetary and psychological costs) and the perceived benefit of the redress is a factor that also affects redress seeking behaviour (Day et al., 1981; Richins and Verhage, 1985). When consumers' perception of the value of the redress is higher than the total cost of complaining, they will engage in redress seeking activities. Therefore it is likely that more expensive items are subject to redress seeking (Day and Landon, 1977; Richins and Verhage, 1985). Since dissatisfaction with more important products leads to higher levels of frustration with the company, consumers also tend to engage in more 'publicly complaining' and negative WOM (Blodgett et al., 1993). Research also states that durable products lead to more 'publicly complaining' than non-durables (Hirschman, 1970; Day and Landon, 1977), and service failures more than product failures (Best and Andreasen,

1977; Day and Landon, 1977). Among different types of service failures problems related to the quality of the service and the delivery of the service generate higher complaining actions than price and location problems (Levesque and McDougall, 1996). Also, problems with the quality of the service lead to greater exit and voice than delivery problems (Levesque and McDougall, 1996). Similarly, among the categories such as price, inconvenience, attraction by competitors and ethical problems, core service failures were found to be the largest category leading to exit behaviour (Keaveney, 1995). It seems that problems related to the quality of the core service are one of the main areas that lead to most exit behaviour and complaining activities.

The next section evaluates the organisational and situational factors in order to outline their effects on the five complaining actions.

4.5. Evaluation of the Factors Influencing CCB

Factors that influence complaining vary in their effects on complaining behaviour. This section presents an evaluation of the organisational and situational factors, exploring their effects on five complaining actions from the Integrated Model of CCB ('no-action', 'exit', 'negative WOM', 'publicly complaining', and 'redress seeking'). Table 4.1 presents a summary and comparison of the influences of organisational and situational factors.

Table 4. 1- The Influences of Organisational and Situational Factors on Five Actions

		No-Action	Exit	Negative WOM	Publicly Complaining	Redress Seeking
Organisational Factors	Perceived Responsiveness	Low level of responsiveness	Low level of responsiveness	Low level of responsiveness	High responsiveness (company only)	High responsiveness (company only)
	Perceived likelihood of success	Low likelihood of success	Low likelihood of success	Low likelihood of success	High likelihood of success (company)	High likelihood of success
	Attributions to the company	No blame to business	Blame to business	Conflicting results		Blame to business
	Marketplace factors	High exit barriers	Low exit barriers	High exit barriers	High exit barriers (third-party only)	
		Unavailability of alternatives	Availability of alternatives	Lack of alternatives	Lack of alternatives	
Situational Factors	Level of dissatisfaction	Low level of dissatisfaction	High level of dissatisfaction	High level of dissatisfaction	High level of dissatisfaction	High level of dissatisfaction
	Severity of the problem	Low level of severity	High level of severity	High level of severity	High level of severity	High level of severity
	Perceived justice		Lack of justice (interactional and distributive)	Lack of justice (interactional and distributive)	Justice (interactional and distributive)	Justice (interactional and distributive)
	Type of product	Unimportant products		Important products	Important products	Important products
	Factors in the boxes lead to an increase in likelihood of the particular complaining action					

Table 4.1 lists the major organisational and situational factors derived from the CCB literature and illustrates how each of the factors influences each of the complaining behaviours. Existence of the factors in the boxes leads to an increase in the likelihood of that particular complaining action. For example, if consumers perceive the responsiveness of the company as low, the customers are more likely to take no-action, exit or provide negative WOM. When companies have a high perceived responsiveness customers are more likely to ‘publicly complain’ and seek redress. Similarly, if the product is important, the likelihood of negative WOM, ‘publicly complaining’ and redress seeking increases. It is important to know that, however, the increase in a particular complaining action may be due to the presence of a single factor or a combination of several factors depending on the research study.

Factors that lead to *no-action* are largely different to those that initiate other complaining actions. When consumers’ perceptions regarding companies’ responsiveness and likelihood of success are low, no-action is more likely. In these cases, consumers do not believe that it is worthwhile to complain. Similarly, if consumers do not blame the company directly, again they do not complain. Also, the presence of exit barriers and absence of alternatives prompts

no-action in consumers. In terms of the situational factors, low levels of dissatisfaction and severity lead to no-action as well as products being unimportant and inexpensive.

Exit is also influenced by organisational and situational factors. Like no-action, if consumers' perceptions regarding companies' responsiveness and likelihood of success are low, the likelihood of exit is high. Consumers tend to exit when they blame the company for the problem. Low exit barriers and availability of alternatives are the other conditions that increase likelihood of exit. Two of the situational factors- high levels of dissatisfaction and severity- increase exit behaviours. These occur when dissatisfaction and severity are high, but consumers' expectations about the outcomes of their complaints are low. Hence, they prefer to leave. Lastly, perceived lack of justice also facilitates exit behaviour.

Negative WOM communications also tend to increase with consumers' perceptions of low level of company responsiveness and low likelihood of success. It seems that when consumers believe that they will not obtain redress, they prefer to engage in private communications. The influence of company attributions on negative WOM is not clear. Some studies suggest that when consumers blame the company, they are more likely to engage in negative WOM (Blodgett et al., 1993; Blodgett et al., 1995), while others indicate that consumers tend to engage in negative WOM when they do not hold blame attributions to the company (Blodgett et al., 1993; Zeelenberg and Pieters, 2004). Marketplace factors influence negative WOM in the same way they influence no-action: high exit barriers and unavailability of alternatives increase the likelihood of negative WOM. The influences of situational factors on negative WOM are similar to those on exit behaviours. High levels of dissatisfaction, high levels of severity and perceived lack of justice increase the likelihood of negative WOM activities. When consumers believe that their experience is not just, they tend to talk about it with their

social circle. Lastly, negative WOM communications increase with important and expensive products.

'Publicly complaining' and redress seeking activities are influenced by organisational and situational factors in similar ways. They are both likely to increase when consumer perception of company responsiveness and likelihood of success is high. These consumers might believe that expending effort to complain publicly or seeking redress is worthwhile, because the company is more likely to respond with a redress. When consumers blame the company, they tend to seek redress. High exit barriers and unavailability of alternatives lead to an increase in the likelihood of 'publicly complaining'. Furthermore, when levels of dissatisfaction and severity are high, both 'publicly complaining' and redress seeking activities tend to increase. If consumers believe that the activities of the company will give justice, this also increases their intention to 'publicly complain' and seek redress. Lastly, consumers prefer to engage in 'publicly complaining' and redress seeking regarding expensive and important products.

4.6. Conclusion

This chapter has presented a review and evaluation of the factors that influence CCB. These factors were grouped into three categories: personal, organisational and situational. Since this research study will not consider personal characteristics, only organisational and situational factors influencing CCB were investigated in this chapter. Organisational factors, which are the characteristics of companies that affect complaining actions, were identified from the CCB literature as 'perceived responsiveness of the company', 'perceived likelihood of success of the complaint', 'consumers' attributions to the company', and 'marketplace factors'. Situational factors are the characteristics of the particular consumption experience which influence CCB: 'level of dissatisfaction', 'severity of the problem', 'consumers'

perception of the justice' and 'product type and problems encountered'. The influences of these two categories of factors over the five complaining actions of the Integrated CCB Model were discussed separately, and an evaluation of their influences presented in Table 4.1.

The next chapter reviews the online complaining behaviour and online complaint handling literature.

CHAPTER 5- LITERATURE REVIEW: ONLINE CONSUMER COMPLAINING BEHAVIOUR & COMPLAINT HANDLING

“FACT: The internet was invented to globalize complaining.”
Kelly Oxford, 10 November 2011, on Twitter:
<https://twitter.com/#!/kellyoxford/status/134765788497330176>

5.1. Introduction

Previous chapters have discussed the typology of complaining actions and factors influencing these actions in general. A model integrating and explaining the variety of complaining behaviours was developed in Chapter 3, and factors influencing these were examined in Chapter 4. Following these discussions of traditional complaining actions, this chapter aims to explore the nature of online complaining activities and companies' complaint handling strategies. The objectives of this chapter are fourfold: (1) to provide a review of online consumer complaining behaviours in order to gather a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, (2) to examine the characteristics of online channels that consumers can use to complain in order to develop a conceptualisation of these, (3) to examine organisational, situational and technological factors in order to investigate their effect on online complaining, and (4) to review literature on offline and online complaint handling in order to understand the changes in this area with the advances of the Internet. This chapter aims to shed light on the current understanding of online complaining actions and companies' ways of responding to these using computer-mediated communications. It is also important in providing a background for the managerial implications of the present study.

This chapter is divided into four main sections. First, Section 5.2 defines online CCB, highlighting the importance of these behaviours for companies and for consumers. Section 5.3 discusses types and characteristics of the available channels for online complaining. This section also includes a discussion of the classification of online complaining channels using

Singh's (1988) CCB taxonomy. Section 5.4 then explores the organisational, situational and technological factors influencing online complaining behaviours. Finally, Section 5.5 reviews the literature on complaint handling.

5.2. Online Consumer Complaining Behaviour: Definition and Importance

Although, online CCB has been usually defined as customers' online public complaining activities in the literature (Tripp and Gregoire, 2011), the present study frames online CCB as consumers' online complaining behaviours in both private and public online channels. Some of these online complaining activities happen simultaneously with traditional complaining activities, but others occur sequentially with offline complaining. The classification and conceptualisation of online complaining behaviours has not yet been fully developed. Some existing studies about online CCB have examined complaining regarding online transactions or online shopping (Ho and Wu, 1999; Cho et al., 2002) or as a form of online negative WOM (e.g. Gelb and Sundaram, 2002; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Jansen et al., 2009; Lee and Youn, 2009). Also, classifications of offline complaining activities such as Day and Landon's (1977) classification of no action, public action and private action have been used to examine online CCB (e.g. Harrison-Walker, 2001).

Activities such as complaining to the company and negative WOM now can be shared with the public using one-to-many communication channels (Pitt et al., 2002; Hong and Lee, 2005). As with traditional complaining, online complaining happens in diverse forms, and in varying intensities (Tripp and Gregoire, 2011). These activities range from short posts on discussion boards to creating websites and publishing music videos (Ward and Ostrom, 2006). For example, Dave Carroll's song and music video, United Breaks Guitars,³ which is about the

³ United Break Guitars: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YGc4zOqozo>

story of his disappointing experience with United Airlines, received 5 million views in the first month on YouTube (Tripp and Gregoire, 2011), and more than 13 million at the time of writing. With such a potentially large audience, online complaining is significant for companies and consumers. The following subsection discusses the importance of online CCB for companies, and advantages and limitations of these for consumers are explored in Section 5.2.2.

5.2.1. Impact of Online CCB for Companies

As with offline complaining behaviours, complaining activities on the Internet carry significant importance for companies. Channel-specific characteristics of online CCB such as the speed and ease of the complaint process increase the importance of these behaviours. The Internet allows consumers to voice their complaints easily without geographical constraints (Ward and Ostrom, 2006) and to reach millions of others. Consumers looking for information are also not limited in their access by time, distance and the size of their social circle as they were with traditional WOM communications (Pitt et al., 2002). It is easy for them to search and use publicly available data on the Internet. Three facets of online CCB that increase the importance of complaining are presented here: the public aspect of the online complaining, the influence of online complaining over purchase decisions, and the limited control of companies.

The complaining process was formerly constrained by the one-to-one method of communication between the consumers and the companies. This is now transformed into a broader form of communication which includes other parties (Hong and Lee, 2005; Schlosser, 2005; Goetzinger et al., 2006; Ward and Ostrom, 2006). Consumers are not limited to the company's customer service department anymore. Most online complaining channels are publicly accessible, and they also enable consumers to engage with others in their discussions.

As a result, (1) anyone can identify online complaints easily through the use of search engines (e.g. Google, Bing) and access these, and (2) online complaining carries characteristics of public communications (Bailey, 2004; Schlosser, 2005). Hence, the dynamics of power in the customer-business relationship has altered by creating an increase in the power of consumers (Harrison-Walker, 2001; Pitt et al., 2002).

The influence of online consumer behaviour on purchase decisions is also an important aspect of online CCB. Fifty-three per cent of Internet users in the UK read product/service reviews online (Intel, 2013). User discussions on online discussion forums have been found to generate more customer interest as influence sources than marketer-generated information (Bickart and Schindler, 2001). Importantly, it has been found that online reviews and ratings influence product sales (Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; Moe and Trusov, 2011; Zhang et al., 2013). For example, Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) reveal that the impact of negative online reviews is larger in decreasing sales than that of positive reviews in increasing them. It seems that consumers use the Internet as a source of information, and purchase decisions are influenced by the content of online information.

Furthermore, companies have little control over consumers' online reviews unless consumers use a company owned or managed website (Harrison-Walker, 2001). For example, United Airlines cannot remove the complaining music video, United Break Guitars, from YouTube. Moreover, companies cannot always easily identify and access consumers' complaining activities online (Pitt et al., 2002). Since consumers can easily use third-party websites or create their own websites to complain about a company, they can reach other consumers even without the company knowing about these. Therefore, companies are limited in their control and administration regarding online CCB, compared with most offline complaining activities.

5.2.2. Advantages and Limitations of Online CCB for Consumers

Using the Internet for complaining has advantages and limitations for consumers as well. This subsection discusses these advantages and limitations.

The Internet provides fast, easy and almost instantaneous communication tools that can be used for complaining. It also does not require high amounts of effort to add supporting evidence through photo and video sharing. Therefore, it is possible to complain on the Internet with less effort compared with most traditional complaining methods (Hong and Lee, 2005; Sparks and Browning, 2010). Consumers can reach and address broader audiences to share their experiences, ask for advice and gather information when they have problems with products and services.

It is believed that the Internet decreases the psychological costs of complaining by providing a place to complain without a direct confrontation (Hong and Lee, 2005), and sometimes anonymously (Gelb and Sundaram, 2002; Bailey, 2004). Since complaining is mainly an act of expressing negative feelings, some offline complaining activities (e.g. face-to-face complaints) might create unwanted social situations. Consumers might feel embarrassment or abstain from complaining so as not to be regarded as whiners (Hong and Lee, 2005). Online complaining channels might help consumers to avoid the possibility of such negative consequences of complaining by providing a remote channel to use (Hong and Lee, 2005; Goldsmith and Horowitz, 2006). Additionally, websites which do not identify users or allow them to create accounts with fake identities can be used in situations when consumers do not want to face the negative aspects of complaining. Therefore, the Internet decreases the perceived psychical effort and psychological costs of complaining, and this might increase the likelihood of online complaining (Strauss and Pesce, 1998; Bickart and Schindler, 2001; Hong and Lee, 2005).

On the other hand, online CCB might have limitations for consumers. First, consumers with limited experience of computers and the Internet may find it difficult to become familiar with online complaining channels. Hence, they might prefer to use traditional complaining methods. Second, consumers who seek immediate redress with their complaint (e.g. product changes because of defects) might perceive online channels as slow methods, and might prefer to use offline methods (e.g. face-to-face) to seek redress. However, some of these consumers may still use online channels to complain as a supplement to their offline complaining.

The next section reviews online complaining channels by examining their characteristics in order to develop a classification.

5.3. Online CCB Channels

This section explores the variety and characteristics of websites that consumers can use to voice their complaints online. These websites can be used for complaining in general or focus on particular products and services offered by a single company. In other cases, they are originally websites with generic purposes which allow users to create their own content (e.g. SNSs). In other words, online complaining can happen wherever consumers are able to create their own content, and have discussions about products/services. Table 5.1 lists the main types of online complaining channels and provides basic descriptions of each.

Table 5. 1- Types of Online Complaining Channels

Type of Website	Description
Anti-brand (hate) sites	User-created websites against a company which usually aims to share information, bring people together, and organise events and protest about this company (e.g. Starbucked.com, killercoke.org).
Blogs	Personal websites of individuals that are updated with commentary, notes, news, experiences and other similar content. Some blog writers dedicate their blogs to particular topics such as

	fashion, and web-design, but some can be general (e.g. thesiswhisperer.com, kellyoxford.tumblr.com).
Company Sites	Official websites of companies. Some have complaint forms to send information directly to company instead of posting publicly, and others have discussion boards.
Feedback/Complaint Sites	Review sites for rating products and services, evaluations and other similar information. These can be generic or devoted to a particular company, brand or type of product (e.g. epinions.com).
Internet (Discussion) Forums	Online discussion sites for asynchronous communication between people who have common interests (e.g. alumni boards, netmums.com).
Online Retailers (e-retailers)	Online shopping services. These usually have review section for products so as customers can discuss and share relevant information (e.g. Amazon.com).
User-Created Content Sites	Online platforms that allow users to create and present their content such as ideas/information/photos/videos/news and share these with others (e.g. YouTube, Flickr).
Social Networking Sites (SNSs)	A type of user-created content site that allows users to create profiles to maintain connections and share their content. Lately, companies have also created official accounts through these services and use them to connect with their customers (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn).

User-created content sites (e.g. Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter) have become commonly used websites to create and share content about dissatisfactory experiences with others. For example, a study examining online WOM behaviours and expressions of brand attitudes on Twitter found that approximately 33% of content about brands includes negative expressions (Jansen et al., 2009). Since user-created content sites, and particularly Facebook, have complex structures that consist of different sections and tools (see Chapter 2), it is important to understand how these work. Therefore, the following sub-section discusses the classification of online complaining channels.

5.3.1. Classification of Online Complaining Channels

As channels of complaining, websites have a variety of features that shape the nature of online complaining. Two main factors that can be used to determine a classification for online complaining channels are the audience of the website, and the owner/creator of the website.

When a website is open access, everybody can browse and view its pages. Hence, these websites have an unlimited audience, and can be used to target the public. Examples of public websites are feedback/complaint sites, Internet (discussion) forums, and some user-created content sites. On these websites, viewing others' complaints is usually fully open to the public, but some might require registration to make a contribution. On the other hand, some websites only allow private complaining. These are usually companies' official websites or services from third-party customer organisations. On these websites, consumers usually fill in forms with information. However, when they submit the information, it is not shared on the website publicly; instead it is sent to the company directly using private methods (e.g. email). Therefore, consumers cannot view others' complaints, and cannot find out about these companies' customer handling practices using these websites.

The owner/creator and the management of the website is another factor that influences complaining on the channel. When the website is owned by the company, consumers can directly communicate their complaints to them. When not owned by the company, consumers can still use the websites to voice their concerns to other consumers, communicate with third-party organisations or try to reach the companies through indirect methods. While companies have full control of direct channels, they have little, if any, control of others. Complaining channels without company management include product review sites, consumer discussion forums, websites of non-profit organisations, and some user-created content sites. Customers can also create or join anti-brand websites.

Some user-created content sites, such as Facebook, carry many features thanks to their variety of sections and tools. As discussed in Chapter 2, companies can create public official pages, consumers can create public pages, and consumers can use their profile pages privately or semi-privately. For example, companies do not have control over users' profiles and consumer-created pages, but Facebook offers tools for companies to manage their official pages. Therefore, Facebook should not be considered as one particular type of channel, but a combination of channels with different characteristics. Hence, a model that explains the channel-specific characteristics of Facebook is needed. In order to develop a model that incorporates channel-specific characteristics and explores their implications for online complaining, Singh's (1988) taxonomy of CCB was applied to Facebook. Singh's (1988) taxonomy distinguishes CCB by its being public/private and the involvement of the complaining activity with the dissatisfactory experience (see Section 3.3.4 and Table 3.2). Table 5.2 shows how this can be applied to complaining activities on Facebook.

Table 5. 2- Singh's Taxonomy of CCB (1988) and Corresponding Sections of Facebook

	External (Public)	Not external (Private)
Involved (Owned by company)	OFFICIAL PAGES (Voice Response)	Empty Cell
Not Involved (Owned by others)	USER-CREATED PAGES & GROUPS (Third-party Responses)	PROFILE PAGES (Private Responses)

Building upon the discussion in Section 3.3.4, Table 5.2 shows the classification of Facebook sections using Singh's voice, private and third-party responses. On the official pages, companies have direct control over complaining activities (e.g. they can delete posts). Therefore, complaining activities on these pages involve the company and are related to disappointing experiences. Also, they are open to the public, so they are external to the consumers' social circle. Hence these are classified as voice responses. User-created pages

and groups are similar to third-party responses, because they are open to the public (i.e. external to consumers), but complaining activities on these pages do not have direct involvement with the company or the dissatisfying experience. Profile pages, on the other hand, are not external to the consumers' social circle, because they are not open to the public. Also, again, complaining activities here are not involved with the dissatisfactory experience, as profiles do not have a connection with the company. Hence, these are classified as private responses.

In order to understand the antecedents of online complaining behaviours, Section 5.4 explores factors influencing online complaining behaviours.

5.4. Factors Influencing Online CCB

This section explores factors influencing consumers' online complaining behaviours. Literature on online CCB shows that this area is changing rapidly due to developments and improvements on the Internet. For example, an early study states that online word of mouth occurs only between strangers, and usually these are experts in their respective areas (Gelb and Sundaram, 2002). However, most online complaining channels now provide information on users' identities, and online WOM creators do not need to be experts. Therefore, these studies' findings should be evaluated according to their date, considering the frequent changes in the area.

Chapter 4 distinguished factors influencing complaining behaviours under three categories; personal, organisational and situation factors. In this chapter, however, an additional category, technological factors, is added in order to cover any technology-related factors that might influence online behaviours. This category encompasses Internet-related factors, channel-specific characteristics and technical features. Since the scope of this research does not

include personal factors, the following subsections discuss organisational, situational and technological factors influencing online complaining activities.

5.4.1. Organisational Factors

Organisational factors influencing online CCB have not been examined as widely as the factors influencing offline CCB in past research. This subsection explores these factors in order to elaborate their effects on online complaining behaviours. Organisational factors that are explored in this section include consumers' perceived responsiveness of the company, perceived likelihood of success of their complaining activity, and marketplace factors.

As with the offline CCB research, online businesses' perceived *responsiveness* has been found to influence consumers' intentions regarding online complaining (Wu, 2012). When consumers have positive perceptions about the responsiveness of an online business, they have higher intentions to complain online. It is possible that, according to these consumers, online complaining might be the only way to complain about a purely online business. Hence, their decision to complain might depend on the perceived responsiveness of the company because of the lack of alternative complaint channels.

Contrary to the research on offline complaining behaviours, consumers' expectations of the *likelihood of redress* have been found to negatively influence the magnitude of the relationship between attitude and intention to complain online (Andreassen and Streukens, 2013). That is, when consumers anticipate high likelihood of redress, they tend not to complain online. It is possible that these consumers might not consider online complaining as a form of direct complaining with an actual possibility of redress. If that is the case, when they expect positive outcomes of redress, they might prefer to complain offline rather than online.

Market-related factors might also influence consumers' online complaining. Dekay (2012), who explored strategies for dealing with negative Facebook posts, suggested that there are distinctive market-specific trends in company responses to negative posts. For example, in his sample, while 87.5% of the companies in the retail industry responded to negative posts on Facebook, only 33.3% of companies in software and services industry responded (Dekay, 2012). If consumers are aware of such market-specific characteristics, they might shape their online complaining behaviours accordingly. For example, positive perceptions about the online practices of an industry might lead to more online complaining on the Facebook pages of companies in that particular industry.

5.4.2. Situational Factors

Level of dissatisfaction and severity, consumers' perceptions of justice, and the product and problem types are situational factors that have been found to influence traditional complaining. This subsection reviews the literature on the influences of these factors on online complaining activities.

Dissatisfaction and severity are significant factors for initiating complaining behaviours in offline markets and have also been found to influence online CCB. Dissatisfaction levels in the online markets have a direct relationship with the propensity to complain online (Cho et al., 2002; Audrain-Pontevia and Balague, 2008). It seems that when consumers are faced with severe dissatisfaction while shopping online, they tend to complain online. Customer satisfaction following online shopping activities was also found to have negative effects on consumers' online complaining intentions (Wu, 2012). The more consumers are not satisfied with their online shopping experience, the more likely they are to complain online.

Consumers' *perceptions of justice* influence their choice of channel for complaining activities. When consumers believe that the company has violated the norms of the customer-company relationship, they seek justice through online complaining (Grégoire et al., 2009; Tripp and Gregoire, 2011). Initially, it was believed that perceived lack of justice decreases online complaining activities. Since consumers who suffer from unfair experiences mostly complain in order to obtain redress (Blodgett et al., 1993; Voorhees and Brady, 2005), these consumers are believed to complain through more direct channels such as face-to-face to obtain redress (Mattila and Wirtz, 2004). However, this argument is not valid if consumers treat online complaining channels as redress seeking tools. As discussed, some online complaining channels allow consumers to communicate with the company directly and seek redress. In these cases, perceived lack of justice should increase online complaining. Indeed, it has been found that customers' perceptions about distributive (i.e. fairness of outcome) and interactional justice (i.e. fairness of interpersonal behaviours) affect their online complaining activities, but not perceptions about procedural justice (i.e. fairness of process) (Wu, 2012). According to this, if consumers believe the outcome of the exchange is unfair (i.e. distributive justice), and their perceived fairness of the personal treatment that they receive is negative (i.e. interactional justice), the likelihood of their online complaining tends to be higher (Wu, 2012). Additionally, online CCB is also associated with consumers' revenge seeking intentions. Especially when online complaining aims to reach mass audiences or existing customers of the company (e.g. anti-brand/hate sites), consumers' motives for complaining are likely to be influenced by revenge (Ward and Ostrom, 2006).

Types of problem that lead to online complaining include generic problems such as pricing, product-related issues, promotion and advertisement, and channel-specific problems such as website content and delivery (Nasir, 2004). When Nasir (2004) investigated themes of

complaints about online shopping, the distribution of complaint categories suggested that delivery, customer relations and product problems garnered the most complaints, and company related problems and pricing the least. On the other hand, explicit marketing efforts (e.g. promotional campaigns) were found to be the reason for the majority of negative posts on company pages on Facebook (Dekay, 2012). Additionally, consumers who are victims of failed customer services can use online channels as fall-back methods, or as the last resort to solve their problems. This situation is referred to as ‘double deviation’ (Bitner et al., 1990; Tripp and Gregoire, 2011). Double deviation occurs when consumers perceive the company’s attempts to resolve the initial dissatisfaction as inappropriate and/or inadequate (Bitner et al., 1990). In the case of double deviation, consumers feel disappointed twice, because the company not only failed to provide an expected product in the first place, but also failed to address the problem satisfactorily (Tripp and Gregoire, 2011). Although, Tripp and Gregoire (2011) consider double deviation to be a significant trigger for online complaining activities, this might not be the case for all online complaining activities. For example, Dave Carroll’s video about United Airlines is an example of double deviation resulting in online complaining, but not all online complaining happens after customer service failures. Therefore, it can be concluded that double deviation might explain some, but not all, online complaining activities.

5.4.3. Technological Factors

Technological factors comprise the final category of factors influencing online complaining behaviours. These are mainly based on the characteristics and features of the Internet and websites as channels for online complaining. Factors in this category include the ease and convenience of online channels, the novelty of computer-mediated communications and the design of websites.

The ease and convenience of the channel is an important factor influencing consumers' channel choice (Bordia, 1997; Brown, 1997; Robertson, 2012). Since computer-mediated communications make the communication process easier and cheaper, one of the most significant motivations to use these channels is convenience (Harrison-Walker, 2001). It has been found that perceived behavioural control (i.e. a person's belief of how easy or difficult a particular action would be) has significant explanatory power in predicting the intention to complain online (Chang and Chin, 2011). Hence, the perceived ease of use of a website has a positive effect on consumers' attitudes toward online complaining (Andreassen and Streukens, 2013). Consumers who believe that online channels are easier to use than offline ones prefer to use these to complain.

Computer-mediated communications and the Internet are no longer new communication methods. However, they might still be considered as *novel* ways of complaining by some consumers. Consumers' competency and experience of using a computer, the Internet, and a particular website might affect their decisions regarding online complaining (Bearden and Teel, 1983; Cho et al., 2002). The novelty of these channels might lead some consumers to prefer traditional complaining.

Consumers' choice of online channels might also depend on the *design* of the particular website. Website design and characteristics might change the nature of complaining activity: while some websites require consumers to fill in forms, online discussion boards are often free from guidelines or regulations, allowing consumers to create their content the way they want. Consumers who prefer interaction might not want to use online forms (Mattila and Wirtz, 2004), and consumers who do not want a public audience might prefer not to use discussion boards. Therefore, the Internet should not be regarded as one particular type of complaining channel. As discussed in Section 5.3, the Internet offers a variety of different

types of website, so the design and structure of the website might affect consumers' use of these.

5.5. Online and Offline Complaint Handling

Complaint handling literature is a research area which aims to understand what consumers want from companies in response to their complaints and suggest ways to provide satisfactory customer services. This section discusses literature on handling offline and online consumer complaints.

It has been found that when consumers voice their concerns to companies offline, they expect to see that the company has an interest in solving the problem and expending effort on the matter (Van Noort and Willemsen, 2012). When companies respond to customer letters with solutions or redress (Clark et al., 1992; Smart and Martin, 1992), and provide authority to handle the problems to front line employees (Tax et al., 1998; Gruber et al., 2006; Donoghue and de Klerk, 2009) customer satisfaction increases. Specifically, the way employees respond to customer dissatisfaction is important; not only competency and ability to solve the problem but also a willingness and genuine interest increase consumer satisfaction (Bitner et al., 1990; Gruber et al., 2008a; Gruber et al., 2011). Gruber et al. (2011:135) define genuine interest as “willingness and inclination of customer contact employees to continuously improve their complaint handling performance, to make efforts for their customer, and to try to meet their needs throughout the customer to frontline employee relationship”. Research on online CCB supports this. It has been found that when companies respond to complaint emails with the intention to solve specific problems or provide redress, customer satisfaction and repurchase likelihood increases (Strauss and Hill, 2001). More specifically, researchers agree that replying to customer's online complaints results in satisfaction, as with offline environments

(Clark et al., 1992; Smart and Martin, 1992; Baer and Hill, 1994; Strauss and Hill, 2001; Byrd, 2012; Dekay, 2012; Van Noort and Willemsen, 2012; Mattila et al., 2013). Defensive strategies, (i.e. putting the company's interest first) such as deleting or ignoring consumer complaints, were found to have a more negative impact on consumers' evaluations of the company than accommodative strategies (i.e. putting the consumer's interests first) in online complaint handling situations (Lee and Song, 2010). While exploring company practices, Dekay (2012) found evidence for defensive strategies, such as 48% of companies in his sample deleted negative posts on their Facebook pages, and 60% of them responded to less than one quarter of total complaining activities. He suggests that companies should use Facebook to engage in real-time conversations with consumers, and that deleting or ignoring consumer posts jeopardises such conversations. Instead, if companies should combine marketing elements (e.g. advertisement and promotions) on their Facebook pages with fun threads, this might help them to decrease the negative posts on their pages (Dekay, 2012). When consumers use a company owned website, companies can respond to complaints directly on that website. However, when online complaining happens on indirect channels (e.g. websites owned by third-parties) companies need to find other response methods. In some cases, they can register on these third-party sites to post their responses. In other cases, they cannot register and contribute on a particular website (e.g. if it is an anti-brand website), but they can still use their official company websites to respond to these consumers' complaints (Bailey, 2004).

Research on offline complaining behaviours has found evidence that when companies respond to consumer complaints, one of the most important aspects of these responses is their 'specificity' (Krentler and Cosenza, 1987; Smart and Martin, 1992). Consumers prefer personal responses which are tailored to refer to the specific points they have raised (Smart

and Martin, 1992). In this way, they know that the company has acknowledged the particular issue, and is taking the necessary steps to solve the problem. Therefore, company responses should always specifically address the particular issues which the consumer has complained about (Clark et al., 1992; Smart and Martin, 1992). Research on online complaint handling agrees: consumers who complain online also expect to see specificity (Strauss and Hill, 2001; Tripp and Gregoire, 2011; Andreassen and Streukens, 2013) rather than boilerplate answers (i.e. generic answers that consist of standard text). Moreover, automatic replies to consumers' complaints, as well as no-replies, create higher levels of negative emotions and lower levels of satisfaction in online environments (Mattila et al., 2013).

Company responses to consumer complaints also need to include features additional to specificity of the response. In offline complaining situations, companies should clearly state that they appreciate the input of consumers (Hart et al., 1990; Smart and Martin, 1992), and provide an apology when it is needed (Nyer, 2000; Donoghue and de Klerk, 2009). In this way, companies can show that they value their consumers' feedback regardless of whether they are complaining or praising (Smart and Martin, 1992). Gruber et al. (2008a) identified some interpersonal characteristics of frontline employees such as friendliness, respectful treatment, listening skills and above all taking the customer seriously as the desired qualities in such situations. This shows that consumers first want to satisfy their interpersonal needs and then consumption or complaint handling needs (Gruber et al., 2008a; Gruber et al., 2011). Personalising the interaction with consumers (i.e. addressing consumers by names, or personal employee signatures), apologies and expressing empathy are also found to improve satisfaction in online environments (Strauss and Hill, 2001; Tripp and Gregoire, 2011; Simon, 2013). Learning from offline complaint handling situations, employees who reply to online posts should be trained on how to respond to complaints, should stay calm while

communicating with consumers, and show friendliness, motivation and willingness to help (Nyer, 2000; Gruber et al., 2006; Donoghue and de Klerk, 2009; Dekay, 2012).

Providing redress in response to consumer complaining has mostly been discussed in offline complaining situations. It is believed that even when an apology is necessary, it is not enough by itself when replying to consumers' complaints. Therefore, companies should also provide a tangible outcome as a response to complaining (Bitner et al., 1990; Goodwin and Ross, 1990; Nyer, 2000). While answering consumer complaint letters is enough for maintaining relationships, if companies want to improve brand loyalty, they should provide redress as well (Clark et al., 1992). Even if consumers may not expect to receive redress as a response to their complaint, they would appreciate this, and it helps to increase positive impressions about the company (Smart and Martin, 1992). To the knowledge of the author, no study specifically focuses on the issue of providing redress for online complaining at the date of this thesis. However, considering the strong relationship between consumer satisfaction and redress in offline markets, companies should also consider providing redress after online complaining activities (Strauss and Hill, 2001).

The response time of the complaint handling process is another important factor influencing customer satisfaction. Early studies on offline complaining indicate that providing a timely response is critical in terms of consumer satisfaction (Smart and Martin, 1992). Overall, the more quickly the company solves the problem, the greater the satisfaction (e.g. Gilly and Gelb, 1982; Tax et al., 1998). However, in their study of consumer complaint letters, Clark et al. (1992) found that when consumers receive a reply, it improves their perceptions of the company's image, regardless of the response time. In online environments, studies have revealed similar results (e.g. Strauss and Hill, 2001; Tripp and Gregoire, 2011). Generally, quicker company response provides higher consumer satisfaction (Strauss and Hill, 2001).

Whereas, technology-savvy consumers have less tolerance for delayed company responses, consumers with less technology enthusiasm are more forgiving in the first 24 hours. After 48 hours of waiting time, the satisfaction levels of both these groups decrease at the same rate (Mattila and Mount, 2003). One way to decrease response time is to send acknowledgement emails to consumers immediately after the complaint. In this way, companies can buy time to solve the problem and send a more detailed response with specific information later (Strauss and Hill, 2001). For example, Amazon.com uses an artificial intelligence system to manage consumer complaints. When the company receives a complaint through its official website, this system compares key words in the text, and generates a response to be sent automatically to the consumer (Andreassen and Streukens, 2013). However, considering that consumers do not favour boilerplate answers, companies need to be careful about acknowledgement emails. Although such systems might provide efficient complaint handling, their outcomes have not yet been explored.

5.6. Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literature on online CCB in order to present the current status of this area. After an introductory section discussing the definition, importance, advantage and limitations of online CCB, the types of websites that can be used as channels for complaining behaviours were explored. These channels are anti-brand (hate) sites, blogs, companies' official websites, feedback/complaint sites, Internet (discussion) forums, online retailers, user-created content sites and specifically social networking sites. A typology of online CCB was designed in order to explain the extent of online complaining activities on Facebook. Using Singh's (1988) taxonomy of CCB, three types of Facebook section were explored in terms of their involvement in the disappointing experience, and the consumers' relationship with the

particular Facebook section. According to this, official pages were identified as voice responses, user-created pages and groups as third-party responses, and profiles as private responses. Next, factors influencing online complaining were investigated in three categories: those from Chapter 4 (organisational and situational factors), and an additional category of technological factors. Organisational and situational factors influencing online CCB showed similar characteristics to factors influencing offline behaviours. Technological factors that alter consumers' online complaining activities were identified as the convenience of channels, the novelty of computer-mediated communications, and website design.

Finally, literature about handling online consumer complaints was reviewed in order to explore companies' complaint handling strategies in the online environment. This found that companies should follow accommodative strategies while dealing with online complaints and shape their responses to target the specific problem and customer. Acknowledging consumers' contribution, addressing them by name, apologising and providing redress are other practices that companies should consider as a part of their complaint handling strategies. Moreover, since faster response provides higher consumer satisfaction, companies should develop practices to decrease their response time.

Chapter 6 will discuss the philosophical standpoint of the present study to show how the research design was conceptualised and developed.

CHAPTER 6- PHILOSOPHICAL STANDPOINT

6.1. Introduction

This chapter explains the considerations and assumptions regarding the philosophical position of this research. The philosophical standpoint of a research study helps to underpin the choices and decisions to be made in how the research is conducted (Carson et al., 2001). In order to reveal the impact of the study, researchers should identify and disclose these decisions and choices (Creswell, 2009). In this way, they can provide a clear purpose with a deeper and wider perspective for the research (Carson et al., 2001). As with every research project, this study's philosophical standpoint shows how the research position was shaped. This chapter outlines the initial conceptual process which ultimately leads to the philosophical standpoint of this study.

The terminology and typology of research philosophies in social science literature are not consistent; it is not exceptional to find the same term used in a variety of different meanings (Crotty, 1998; Goulding, 1999). Crotty (1998) identified positivism, interpretivism, critical inquiry and post-modernism as four different types of theoretical perspective whereas Carson et al. (2001) placed seven different research philosophies (critical theory, realism, constructivism, hermeneutics, humanism, natural inquiry and phenomenology) on a continuum between positivism and interpretivism, and Bryman (2008) dichotomised epistemological positions only as positivism and interpretivism and identified others as sub-categories of these two. Also, different paradigms with particular philosophies and strategies sometimes overlap in existing data sources and/or methods (Goulding, 1999). Furthermore, different researchers sometimes identify one concept with different names. For example, interpretivism has been given other names such as naturalism by Belk et al. (1988),

constructivism by Guba and Lincoln (1994), or qualitative paradigm by Creswell (1998). In order to deal with this confusing predicament, researchers should follow the way that best suits their particular research purposes (Crotty, 1998). This research followed the roadmap described below for this purpose.

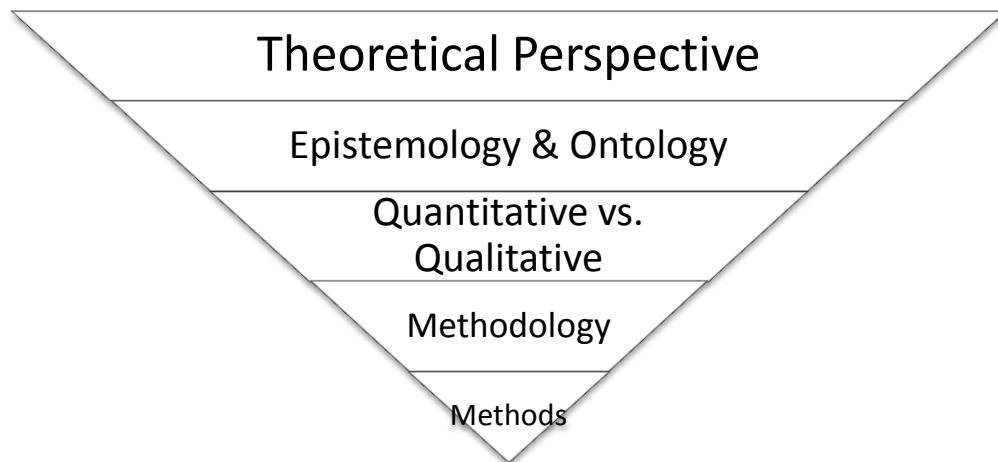
The theoretical perspective describes the researcher's way of looking at the world and making sense of it by providing a context for the research and grounding its logic and criteria (Crotty, 1998). Therefore, assumptions regarding the theoretical perspective should lie behind the other philosophical considerations.

Basic beliefs about reality and knowledge shape the worldview of the individual (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). These are based on the individual's theoretical considerations and therefore, we can refer to epistemology (nature of knowledge about reality) and ontology (nature of reality) inherent in the theoretical perspective (Creswell, 2009).

Although many researchers still prefer to differentiate research in two broad perspectives as *qualitative* and *quantitative* research and refer to these umbrella terms for their other epistemological decisions, these are in fact better used for the description of research types and methods: these discussions should be secondary to questions of the theoretical perspective as well as epistemological and ontological considerations (Guba and Lincoln, 1994), and should be followed by specific research methods.

Figure 6.1 illustrates the route map of these relationships which start with broad and abstract issues and move to the concrete tools and techniques of the methodology.

Figure 6. 1- Research Design Schema



Section 6.2 explains the selection of the theoretical perspective of the present study after discussing two opposing perspectives: positivism and interpretivism. Deciding on ‘interpretivist’ perspectives, epistemological and ontological considerations are discussed in Section 6.3. After exploring perspectives such as realism, phenomenology, hermeneutics and constructionism, this section shows why constructionism is chosen for the present study. Section 6.4 delves into the debate between quantitative and qualitative research methods, and concludes that qualitative methods are suitable for the theoretical and epistemological standpoint of this study. Finally, Section 6.5 sheds light on reliability and validity considerations. Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) criterion for research assessment, trustworthiness, is presented in this section, and then its adoption in this study explained.

6.2. Theoretical Perspective

In the social sciences, debates about the theoretical perspective centre on the choices of informing and guiding enquiry (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). The main question is “how can we know and represent what we know about reality” (Spiggle, 1994:491). The answer illuminates the issue of how the social world can and should be studied: do we follow the same principles and procedures as the natural sciences apply, or use a “different logic of research procedure

that reflects the distinctiveness of humans as against the natural order” (Bryman, 2008:15). Supporters of the former position are known as “positivists” and of the latter as “interpretivists”. Positivists support following same principles and procedures to study human interactions, whereas interpretivists believe that social study requires different and specialised procedures.

This ‘competition between the two paradigms’ has been discussed by many social scientists, such as Creswell (1998), Guba and Lincoln (1994) and especially consumer researchers like Hirschman (1986), Lutz (1989), and Spiggle (1994). The controversy in consumer research over different perspectives creates a need to examine and understand the different theoretical perspectives in order to select that best suited for this research. Section 6.2.1 and section 6.2.2 discuss positivism and interpretivism.

6.2.1. Positivism

Positivism holds that science should be concerned with verifying the meanings and existence of objects using reliable methods (Hart, 1998). Positivist approaches advocate that the world is external and objective (Carson et al., 2001) with an apprehendable single reality driven by immutable natural laws and mechanisms (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). The aim of research is to scientifically discover and measure these independent elements of reality. To maintain this approach, positivists seek objectivity and employ rational and analytical approaches though the use of scientific techniques such as causality analysis, hypothesis testing and theory development (Carson et al., 2001). Data and analysis should be kept value-free without any external influence (Healy and Perry, 2000), maintaining a clear distinction between facts and value judgements (Carson et al., 2001). This also means that the researcher and object of investigation (e.g. research participants) should be kept separate. This is achieved by

eliminating or reducing any influence from the investigator to the object or from the object to the investigator which threatens the validity of the research, using particular empirical methods and methodologies (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Positivists adopt mostly quantitative data processing methods such as statistics and mathematical techniques (Carson et al., 2001). In this way, positivism can concentrate on the description and explanation of the object of research with scientific and normative statements (Carson et al., 2001). It uses highly structured techniques to reach law-like generalisations, and it is believed that this leads to further development of theory (Saunders et al., 2009). Positivism has been the dominant perspective in the physical and social sciences for hundreds of years (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Considering its benefits such as objectivity, validity and generalisability, positivism has been the foundation stone of improvements and developments in modern science. Critics of positivism, however, suggest that it is not an appropriate method of study for social phenomena which involve humans and their experiences (Healy and Perry, 2000). The accurate and certain constitution of positivism contrasts with the opinions, beliefs, feelings and assumptions of humans (Crotty, 1998), because it is believed that these cannot be value-free, independent and objective.

6.2.2. Interpretivism

Interpretivists believe that the ‘scientific world’ (i.e. the world addressed by positivist science) “is not the everyday world we experience”, because scientific structures impose a highly systematic, well-organised world that contrasts with uncertain, ambiguous, idiosyncratic and changeful manners of the everyday world experienced by humans (Crotty, 1998:28). Furthermore, the subject matter of social sciences (i.e. people and their institutions) is fundamentally different from the objects of the natural sciences (Carson et al., 2001). Human behaviour is complex, subjective and voluntaristic in a way that prevents causal conclusions

(de Vaus, 2009). Due to the distinctiveness of humans as opposed to highly systematic natural sciences, interpretivists believe that different principles and procedures are needed to identify and understand the subjective matters of the social sciences.

Interpretivism seeks to reach deep understandings and detailed descriptions of the subject of research. Generally this happens in the form of understanding and interpreting the meanings and experiences of the research participants (Spiggle, 1994). As Carson et al. (2001:64) state “the main purpose of interpretivist methodologies is to achieve substantive meaning and understanding of *how* and *why* questions in relation to the phenomena under investigation” (italics in original). In order to assure this, research should take account of (1) multiple realities and different perspectives of people, (2) the researcher’s involvement, and (3) contextual understanding and interpretation of data (Carson et al., 2001).

Contrary to the belief in a single reality in positivism, interpretivism recognises the multiple realities constructed by human beings (Hirschman, 1986). Humans do not have one reality about the world, but their knowledge about the world is meaningful in their own terms, and may change according to different perspectives. Therefore, it is not possible to demonstrate one concrete truth by using scientific principles (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This does not mean that interpretivist research rejects the concept of the ‘real world out there’, but it holds that reality is subjectively experienced by humans, including researchers. It can be understood and interpreted only in their own terms by using qualitative approaches (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1992).

Secondly, according to interpretivism the researcher and the phenomenon under study are linked to each other. Interpretivist researchers take part in the study directly through their involvement with the social phenomena from the perspective of participants rather than

studying them as a part of the physical world (Szmigin and Foxall, 2000). Therefore, understanding arises from the researcher's direct experience rather than by manipulation of experimental variables (Hirschman, 1986). Also, Guba and Lincoln (1994) highlight that interaction between researcher and participants is one of the factors that creates findings. The researcher is not solely an external observer, but also part of the object of investigation.

Interpretivist studies focus on the understanding of social phenomena in the given context. As Hirschman (1986:245) states, "no two social contexts are ever identical". Since realities are identified by what people have in their minds based on a particular social context, they change according to their context (Healy and Perry, 2000). Therefore, interpretivist social science investigates reality by taking account of the contexts of the phenomena under study. In this way, it is possible to understand and interpret each reality according to its own particular contextual terms. Also, it should be kept in mind that this is one of the reasons that the findings of interpretivist studies are only relevant and valid in the particular context of that research (Carson et al., 2001).

Interpretivists support the idea of social phenomena emerging through time (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1992). Constructions about the phenomenon under study are subject to continuous creation and revision by social actors (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, interpretivist researchers examine their subjects in a process of continuous emergence rather than focusing on only one aspect at a point in time: the research design evolves with the changing constructions and contexts through time (Szmigin and Foxall, 2000).

There is no one single best method for research in marketing (Carson et al., 2001). Researchers have compared and contrasted positivist and interpretivist approaches based on ontological, epistemological and methodological perspectives in order to understand their

fundamental principles and divisions. Table 6.1 illustrates the main differences between these two paradigms.

Table 6. 1- Fundamental Differences between Positivism and Interpretivism

Positivism	Interpretivism
Objective	Subjective
Single (true) Findings/Meanings	Multiple created Findings/Meanings
Direct access to real world	No direct access to real world
Focus on Realism	Focus on Relativism
Focus on Generalisation	Focus on Specific and Concrete
Description and Explanation (cause and effect relationships)	Understanding and Interpretation
External Observer	Insider Researcher
Value-free (distinction between facts and values)	Value-bound (no clear distinction between facts and values)
Statistical and mathematical methods	Primarily non-quantitative methods

Source: Adapted from 'Qualitative Marketing Research' (Carson et al., 2001) and 'Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994)

The main division between these two approaches can be summarised, thus positivist approaches use objective facts and statistical analysis to explain causal relationships and make statistical generalisations; interpretivist approaches try to understand reality through qualitative procedures tailored to suit each case (Carson et al., 2001). Another way to look at the difference is to focus on their purpose for social sciences: while positivists emphasise the explanation of human behaviour, interpretivists focus on understanding human behaviour (Bryman, 2008). The next section explains why interpretivism is selected as the theoretical perspective of the present study.

6.2.3. Choosing a Theoretical Perspective: Interpretivism

Since there is no single best marketing research approach, one should examine the value and validity of the available approaches. Considering the above discussions, the researcher believes that the choice of the approach can be considered in relation to the following characteristics of the research in question: (1) focus of the research (2) objectives of the

research, (3) role of the researcher, and (4) worldview of the researcher. Examination of the characteristics of this study shows that an interpretivist approach is most appropriate.

Focus of the research: The main aim of this research is to understand how and why people complain online. It focuses on understanding and explaining different online complaining experiences rather than measuring variables related to complaining behaviour.

Objectives of the research: The findings are sought to be used to understand context-specific conditions. Since the subject matter is too complex and changeable, it is not aiming to make context-free generalisations.

Role of the researcher: The researcher participates directly in the research matter as an insider explorer rather than being a detached, external observer, experiencing what she studies and benefiting from her personal experiences and feelings as part of the research.

Worldview of researcher: With this study the researcher aims to understand the subjective reality of consumers by exploring their behaviour in the way that is meaningful to them. This view of the consumer behaviour holds that human behaviour and experiences are emerging, ambiguous and contextual. Facts and value judgements do not have a clear distinction, and both can be used as data to understand and explain why people have different experiences. Additionally, the researcher believes that the Internet is a cultural context shaped by online experiences, beliefs and practices of individuals. Therefore, exploring individuals' online behaviours is a way to understand how they construct their reality in the Internet.

To sum up, interpretivism emphasises interpretive processes as a way to understand the subject matter in its specific context. Also as Carson et al. (2001:64) state, "the main purpose of interpretivist methodologies is to achieve substantive meaning and understanding of *how*

and *why* questions in relation to the phenomena under investigation” (italics in original). For these reasons, interpretive methodologies are believed to be appropriate for this study.

6.3. Epistemology and Ontology

Researchers’ standpoints regarding the nature of knowledge about reality (epistemology) and the nature of reality (ontology) are mostly hidden in the research process (Creswell, 2009). However, social science researchers should clearly identify and explain their standpoints in order to reveal the structure and effectiveness of their study. This section introduces these concepts, and explains the choices regarding the epistemology and ontology of this study.

Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge, and questions *what the acceptable knowledge in a given research context is* (Carson et al., 2001). Central epistemological issues provide grounds for the discussions of what kinds of knowledge are possible and how researchers can ensure that the knowledge is adequate and legitimate (Crotty, 1998).

Ontology is the study of the nature of social entities (Carson et al., 2001; Creswell, 2009). The main point of ontological consideration is the question of *what is the form and nature of reality* (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

Carson et al. summarise the relationship between ontology and epistemology:

“Essentially, ontology is reality, epistemology is the relationship between reality and the researcher...” (Carson et al., 2001:4)

In debates in social sciences, the positivist ontology assumes that social entities and the real world should be considered objectively and reality should be external to social actors. Conversely, the interpretivist ontology holds that realities are social constructions built by the

perceptions and actions of social actors and knowledge of the real world is meaningful to social actors on its own terms (Crotty, 1998; Carson et al., 2001).

Crotty (1998:10) indicates that “epistemological and ontological issues tend to emerge together”, and because of their mutual influence, it is difficult to separate them conceptually. The explanation of one is constrained by the explanation of the other (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, it was decided not to separate epistemological and ontological standpoints for this study.

Under the umbrella term of interpretivism fall many accepted epistemological and ontological ideas with their own philosophies, strategies and methods (Goulding, 1999). Perspectives such as realism, phenomenology, hermeneutics and constructionism are primarily concerned with understanding human behaviour and are widely applied within marketing and consumer research.

Realism, however, differs somewhat from the others regarding its views of nature of reality and truth (Peter, 1992). Realists believe that there is one real and true world to discover. However, it is not completely apprehendable because science cannot know and say what the real world exactly is (Healy and Perry, 2000). Realists emphasise the difference between the real world and perceptions of this world (Carson et al., 2001). According to them, perception is not the reality itself; rather it is a window onto reality which can be used to triangulate the image of reality with the help of the perceptions, or windows, of others (Healy and Perry, 2000). Therefore, realism relies on multiple perceptions as data sources about one true reality and tries to reach that one true reality as the aim of the study.

Phenomenology and hermeneutics are orientated toward the empathic understanding of human experience from the actor’s own perspective (Goulding, 1999). According to this,

reality is not regarded as one real truth, but the way it appears to individuals in their consciousness (Carson et al., 2001). Researchers try to understand how individuals make sense of the world. Hence, the aim is to try to see the world from the participants' perspective while eliminating the initial assumptions about it (Goulding, 1999). Compared to phenomenology, hermeneutics is more context orientated, and also tries to reach beyond the observable (Carson et al., 2001). Phenomenologists only focus on the views and experiences of the participants, while hermeneutics engage with other forms of data about social phenomena such as cultural, social, and environmental factors.

Constructionism believes that all knowledge, all reality and their meanings are continually being constructed by individuals, and their interactions with each other. Therefore the world is being developed and transmitted in a social context (Crotty, 1998). According to this, "truth is a construction that refers to a particular belief system held in particular context" (Carson et al., 2001:16). In this view, realities are socially and experientially constructed as multiple entities based on particular contexts (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Unlike realism, the existence of multiple perceptions about reality within constructionism does not mean that these realities can be used for triangulation, or any other sort of generalisation. Instead, constructionism explains the nature of reality by individuals' perceptions being their own realities, therefore, it is not possible to evaluate these perceptions to reach one ultimate and unique reality (Peter, 1992).

In particular, this study addresses epistemological and ontological issues with regard to 'constructionism'. The main reason for this choice is that constructionism is useful when research aims to understand how consumers perceive the research subject (Carson et al., 2001), and it complies with the worldview of the researcher (see Section 6.2.3). That is, in this study, reality is regarded as how individuals perceive their online behaviours, and

understanding reality is possible through observing individuals' constructions of the meanings of their online behaviours.

As the terminology of research philosophies is not consistent in the literature, different views of constructionism are associated with discrete perspectives, which therefore involve different aspects of epistemology and ontology (Potter, 1996). Also, another term, 'constructivism'⁴ is used for epistemological considerations that focus exclusively on the meaning-making activity of individuals (Crotty, 1998). Additionally, when constructionist approaches are used by different disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, political science and literary studies, different features and focuses might be shaped by the particular discipline (Potter, 1996). Therefore, it is possible to explain and define constructionism differently, but in this research it will be adopted as the philosophical stance that supports the view that all knowledge and meanings are constructed by individuals within one particular context (Crotty, 1998). Since this view covers aspects of both knowledge and meanings about reality, there is no conceptual distinction between epistemology and ontology here.

As stated before, one of the main positions of constructionism is the belief that realities in the world are not discovered, but are constructed by individuals (Crotty, 1998). Hence, "no interpretation of that world can be made independently of human sensations, perceptions, information processing, feelings and actions" (Peter, 1992:74). In other words, without individuals who interpret the world, there will be no any reality or meanings. Therefore, meanings and truth, as in the findings of a study, cannot be described as objective facts, but they can be presented as the interpretations of individuals (i.e. the researcher of a study).

⁴ Crotty (1998) explains constructivism as an epistemological stance that focuses on 'meaning-making' activity of individuals whereas constructionism is a broader position that includes ontological considerations and is also interested in 'meaning' itself.

Therefore, constructionist studies present a particular version of the reality in a particular context instead of definitive and generalisable results.

Constructionism examines the intangible mental constructions of individuals that create multiple realities (Carson et al., 2001). Guba and Lincoln (1994) explain that even though constructionist studies aim toward a consensus of research results, findings are always open to new and different interpretations, especially with different levels of sophistication of researchers or with the existence of different social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender factors of researchers. At the end, there is no one true, valid or better interpretation; but useful, liberating, fulfilling and rewarding interpretations (Crotty, 1998). Moreover, these interpretations are subject to continuous change, as there are always new and/or different constructions by researchers (Peter, 1992).

Constructionism believes that meanings and truth are constructions that refer to a particular belief system held in a particular context (Carson et al., 2001), and the aim is the understanding of the constructions of these meanings (Crotty, 1998). Therefore, knowledge created through research depends on the interaction of individuals and the researcher (Carson et al., 2001). Researchers do not discover meanings (i.e. findings), but become more aware of individuals' constructions through their observations and comparison of their own and participants' constructions (Hirschman, 1986; Carson et al., 2001): the relationship of the researcher and participants is blurred due to the co-creation of meanings (i.e. findings).

6.4. Quantitative vs. Qualitative Research: Qualitative Methods

The main distinction between quantitative and qualitative research methods is the fact that quantitative studies employ measurement methods such that their results can be summarised

in numbers, but qualitative studies require verbal explanations (Ten Have, 2004). However, the differences between these methodologies extend beyond the issue of using numbers or words; qualitative and quantitative methods also differ in terms of their research strategies. Therefore, decisions about methodology should come after the choice of qualitative or quantitative methods. This section explains these methods, and the reasons for choosing qualitative methods for the present study.

The two approaches may be used with any research paradigm as long as they serve the requirements of the study (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). However, the traditional view states that quantitative studies adopt mostly deductive approaches (theory testing), and qualitative studies generally adopt inductive processes (theory building) (Carson et al., 2001; Creswell, 2009). Moreover, quantitative studies tend to follow from the positivist perspective and practise the norms of the natural scientific model, while qualitative approaches emphasise ways of interpreting the social world from individual perspectives (Ten Have, 2004; Bryman, 2008). Therefore, quantitative research mostly focuses on summaries and statistical explanations, while qualitative research tries to present complex descriptions and explain meanings. The main points differentiating qualitative and quantitative methods are summarised in Table 6.2.

Table 6. 2- Fundamental Differences between Qualitative and Quantitative Research Strategies

	Qualitative	Quantitative
Unit of Analysis	Texts	Numbers
Researcher	Close	Distant
Principal Orientation	Inductive	Deductive
Epistemological Orientation	Interpretivism	Natural Sciences (Positivism)
Ontological Orientation	Constructionism	Objectivism

Source: Based on Social Research Methods (Bryman, 2008)

Carson et al. (2001:66) explain:

“Qualitative research is suitable where the research emphasis is on in-depth understanding of how and why and in what context certain phenomena occur; and what impacts upon or influences such phenomena. It is more appropriate where the explanation and understanding of behaviour or activities matter more than specific measurements.”

Therefore, considering the main purposes and the philosophical standpoint of this research, it is more appropriate to adopt qualitative methods for this study.

6.5. Reliability and Validity: Trustworthiness

Qualitative research methodologies are sometimes criticised in the quantitative social science literature for their lack of standardisation and systematic data collection and analysis techniques (Ten Have, 2004). According to Bryman (2008), quantitative literature suggests using qualitative methods only for exploratory studies, because these methods do not have *reliable* and *valid* foundations. However, it is actually possible to adapt these foundations to qualitative research, or develop alternative criteria specially designed for qualitative research. Exploring reliability and validity considerations, this section explains how ‘trustworthiness’ can be applied as a criterion for assessing qualitative studies.

Reliability is concerned with the degree of consistency of research findings (Saunders et al., 2009). Findings are reliable if they are consistent over time, accurate representations of the population, and replicable under similar methodologies (Creswell, 2009). *Validity* refers to the issue of truthfulness of research measures. It is concerned with whether the findings are really about what they claim to be about (Saunders et al., 2009). In other words, valid measures successfully assess the concepts that they need to measure, in order to deliver conclusions. Since positivism is based on experimental methods and seeks generalisations, it is necessary to assess and ensure the quality of research by using reliability and validity criteria. However, their relevance to interpretivist and qualitative research is in dispute (Bryman, 2008).

Stenbacka (2001) claims that qualitative research requires its own quality assessments. She argues that since reliability is about measuring and the purpose of qualitative research is to generate understanding rather than measuring, reliability is irrelevant to the assessment of qualitative studies. Other researchers have claimed that qualitative research should be judged by the same criteria as quantitative research, and have tried to adapt the concepts of reliability and validity to qualitative research. For example, LeCompte and Goetz (1982) adjusted reliability and validity concepts to qualitative research by changing their meanings. According to their terminology, reliability (also called here internal reliability) can be maintained by having more than one observer. If all of the researchers/observers agree on the explanation of their data, the consensus of the group secures the internal reliability. On the other hand, (internal) validity measures the degree of match between the researcher's observations about reality and the theoretical ideas that they develop before the data analysis (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). Here, the central task is to structure the measurement in a way that reduces ambiguities by eliminating the possible alternative interpretations of findings (de Vaus, 2009)

A third position argues that qualitative studies have completely different perspectives to quantitative ones, therefore require different criteria which should be particularly tailored for each paradigm. Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose a version of the criteria to assess qualitative studies, which draws from the constructionist approaches. Their criteria are based on the belief that there is not only one absolute reality in the social world. Therefore, they deny the use of one simple method of assessing qualitative research: different studies require different criteria. Lincoln and Guba (1985) use the term 'trustworthiness' for their perspective that features specific characteristics of different research studies. Trustworthiness aims to maintain the quality of qualitative research through four separate criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Credibility: Credibility is concerned with ensuring the acceptability of research findings. Interpretivist and constructionist studies promote the possibility of multiple constructed realities, so there is no one concrete interpretation of reality (Hirschman, 1986). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the researcher should determine the acceptability of data through adequate representations of multiple realities and credible reconstructions of original multiple realities. This can be ensured by good practice and member validations (i.e. submitting research findings to the individuals upon whom it is based and seeking confirmation) (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Transferability: Transferability refers to the degree to which findings can be used across other social contexts (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Interpretative researchers do not tend to generalise findings, because no two social contexts are identical and objects under study have certain characteristics that illustrate the uniqueness of the context (Hirschman, 1986). Moreover, even the same research will not necessarily hold in the same context at a different time; it is always possible that different results may be revealed (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Therefore, the results of qualitative research are based on context, the theoretical sensitivity of the social phenomena, and the skills of the researcher. This means that findings cannot be generalised beyond the range of study (Carson et al., 2001). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that since generalisability of findings is not possible, qualitative research should provide thick descriptions (i.e. rich details about the specifics of the context) to present contextual information. Thick descriptions allow researchers to make their own judgments about the transferability of the findings, so resolving problems with transferability individually (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

Dependability: In order to evaluate the consistency of instruments of interpretivist and constructionist approaches, Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed *auditing* by multiple

researchers. The use of multiple investigators enhances the dependability of the research process, because comparing the interpretations of different researchers helps to determine the elements that are consistent across multiple interpretations (Hirschman, 1986). However, this method is not widely accepted because it requires too much auditing effort due to the large data sets of qualitative studies (Bryman, 2008).

Confirmability: Confirmability ensures that researchers do not influence the conduct of the research and findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Complete objectivism is not desirable for interpretative studies; the researcher should be involved with the topic of study and engage with it personally. The researcher's interpretation should represent a set of conclusions designed according to their interaction with the social context (Hirschman, 1986). However, researchers should act in good faith and not allow their values and feelings to change the results or progress of the study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In order to ensure this, Lincoln and Guba (1985) again propose using external auditors who can review the documentation and confirm whether the conclusions are appropriate and supportable to the information collected (Hirschman, 1986).

Interpretivist approaches, contrary to positivism, aim to understand rather than measure. Constructionist approaches believe that research findings are always partial and differ for every situation (Crotty, 1998). Therefore, having interpretivist and constructionist approaches, it was decided to follow Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework of trustworthiness to assess the credibility of the current study. Member validations were sought to determine the acceptability and representation of data (credibility). For this purpose, four research participants were consulted at the end of the data analysis period for their consideration and comments by providing them with a summary of the findings. Moreover, thick descriptions were used to present contextual information to allow other researchers and readers to make

their own judgements (transferability). Chapter 2 introduced Facebook and discussed the structure of Facebook sections, aiming to provide an understanding of the context. Findings were presented (Chapters 8 and 9) with explanations and additional information where necessary to allow readers to understand the context. Quotations were also included to illustrate the findings. Finally, the dual supervision process aimed to evaluate the consistency of the study and appropriateness of conclusions (dependability and confirmability).

Additionally, Carson et al. (2001:67) believe trustworthiness can be ensured by following three principles at various stages of the study:

- (1) “careful use, interpretation, examination and assessment of appropriate literature, prior theory and empirical results;”
- (2) “careful justification of the methodologies employed in a study;”
- (3) “and careful structuring of data analysis to ensure full and descriptive evaluation and assessment”

In order to maximise the trustworthiness of the present study, these three principles will be followed at all stages.

The only exception to the approach of trustworthiness in this study is regarding the transferability or generalisation of the research findings. Contrary to the view that interpretivism cannot make generalisations about social life, Williams (2000) argues that interpretivist approaches can, and in fact in most cases do, make generalisations. He claims that “generalisation seems to be inevitable in interpretivist research. Indeed, virtually every reported study will contain at least some kinds of generalising claim” (Williams, 2000:210). He suggests that the possible reason for the difference between his and other interpretivist researchers’ views may lie in the definition of generalisation. Believing the existing definitions of generalisation do not comprehend all possible meanings, he suggests three separate definitions for generalisation: ‘total generalisation’, ‘statistical generalisation’, and

‘moderatum generalisation’ (Williams, 2000). According to Williams (2000), total generalisations are impossible for social research, because in order to ensure a total generalisation, the sample of the study should be identical to the population in every detail. This approach is similar to Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) belief about generalisations. Secondly, statistical generalisation, happens when the probability of a situation occurring can be estimated by looking at samples. Even though this is only possible with quantitative data, in social sciences some systems lead to statistical prediction to varying degrees of success, so this type of generalisation might be possible. Since data and the context of interpretive research are not always suitable for statistical analysis, statistical generalisations are not always possible. Nevertheless, interpretivists can and do make ‘moderatum generalisations’, or generalisations of everyday life. This is defined as occurring “where the aspects of [sample] can be seen to be instances of a broader recognisable set of features” (Williams, 2000:215). Williams (2000) suggests that researchers attempt to interpret data according to a subjective frame of reference of their data source and social environment. In this way, they can explore the characteristics of each case in its particular context. Due to the cultural consistency in the social world, these characteristics are generalisable in their particular social context, so he concludes that moderatum generalisations are possible in interpretivist research:

“thus everyday moderatum generalisations are what it is that the researcher wants to *understand*, and of course if she can *understand* them then she will *know* something of the cultural consistency within which they reside and is then able to make her own generalisations about that cultural consistency” (Williams, 2000:220, emphasis added by italics)

Therefore, it can be concluded that following Williams’s (2000) proposition, this research aims to make moderatum generalisations about online consumer complaining behaviours.

6.6. Conclusion

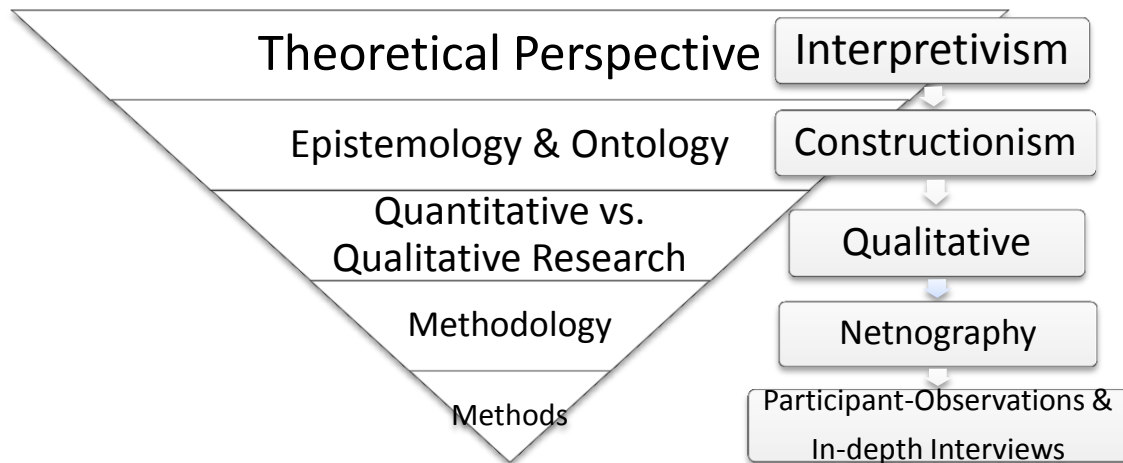
This chapter has presented the philosophical standpoint of the current study. The exploration and review of theoretical perspectives suggested ‘interpretivism’ as the appropriate research perspective for this study. Interpretivism aims to reach deep understandings and detailed descriptions of the subject of research. In interpretivistic studies, there is no one true reality, instead individuals have different perspectives about their realities. Considering that the perceptions of reality can change in different contexts, the research findings are based on contextual understanding and interpretation of data. Moreover, in order to help the researcher to grasp participants’ perspectives of reality, interpretivist studies sometimes require researcher involvement with the research context. Constructionism, which views reality as being continually constructed by individuals and their interactions, addresses the epistemological and ontological questions of this study. In particular, reality is seen as individuals’ own constructs of their online identities and behaviours, and it is acknowledged that reality might change with different participants, researcher or context. Therefore, the research findings cannot be generalised. However, they can be used to reach ‘moderatum’ generalisations, defined by Williams (2000) as generalisations of everyday life: the findings of this research are generalisable in their particular context, and should be interpreted based on its subjective frame of reference. This research uses qualitative research methods which focus on understanding how and why a social phenomenon occurs in a particular context. Finally, in order to ensure systematic data collection and analysis, Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) research criterion, trustworthiness, was followed. The quality of the current study will be assessed by the four dimensions of trustworthiness- credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability-. The next chapter builds upon this discussion by presenting the methodological considerations and the research design.

CHAPTER 7- METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND RESEARCH DESIGN

7.1. Introduction

As Chapter 6 discussed, the philosophical standpoint of a study shapes decisions regarding research methods and procedures. Building upon the discussion in Chapter 6, this chapter provides information on methodological considerations, and presents the research design. In order to reach deep understandings and detailed descriptions of online CCB, this study adopts interpretivistic approaches with a constructionist viewpoint. Hence, ethnography that attempts to understand and describe social phenomena, is considered for the research methodology. Given that this study is about consumers' online behaviours, an online version of ethnography, netnography, is employed as the main methodology. Two integral methods of ethnography- observations and in-depth interviews- are used as the data collection methods. Figure 6.1 illustrated the route map of the philosophical underpinning. Now, Figure 7.1 explains how the methodology and methods of this study are linked to the discussion in Chapter 6.

Figure 7. 1- Research Design



This chapter addresses the methodology and main methods employed in this study. Section 7.2 describes 'netnography', the methodology of this study. Subsections 7.2.1 and 7.2.2

present the online methods and procedures, and explain how data were collected through the first and second phases of the data collection (i.e. participant-observations and in-depth interviews). Section 7.3 explains the procedures followed for data analysis, and the use of computer-assisted data analysis software (NVivo). This is followed by a discussion of ethical implications linked to online research and conducting an ethical netnography (Section 7.4). Finally in Section 7.5, methodological limitations arising from the nature of computer-mediated communications in general, and the use of particular methods in this study are explained and their implications are recognised.

7.2. Netnography

Given that this is an interpretative study that aims to explore and understand online behaviour, an online ethnographic research method, netnography, was used as the research methodology. This section explains netnography and presents the netnographic methods used in this study. Ethnography as a research method aims to address consumers' behaviour fully and accurately through rich and detailed descriptions (Atkinson et al., 2001). Ethnographic research methods try to understand and describe a social and cultural phenomenon from the emic or insider's perspective (Given, 2008). This way, ethnographies can be used to understand and develop insights about naturally occurring phenomena (Carson et al., 2001). Ethnographers are typically participant observers, but they can combine other methods such as interviews and focus groups to broaden their understanding (Bryman, 2008). Ethnographic research methods can be adapted to computer-mediated communications for a deep understanding of online social groups and cultures. Although there will be physical distance between participants and researcher, online environments can offer rich and insightful data through reflexive and rigorous practices (James and Busher, 2009). Some researchers have preferred to give their

online ethnographies distinctive terms, and developed these as separate methodologies such as virtual ethnography (Hine, 2000), webnography (Puri, 2007) and netnography (Kozinets, 1999, 2010). When conducting online ethnographies, researchers need to ensure that their practices and procedures are applicable to the requirements and limitations of computer-mediated communications. In order to respond to this problem, Kozinets (2002, 2010) developed procedural guidelines involving six steps for conducting an online ethnography. This approach is called netnography. Netnography is defined as “participant-observational research based in online fieldwork. It uses computer-mediated communications as a source of data to arrive at the ethnographic understanding and representation of a cultural or communal phenomenon.” (Kozinets, 2010:60) Netnography can be used to explore consumer insights, impressions and motivations and linkages between consumption and the Internet (Kozinets, 2002). It uses naturalistic techniques to study consumer behaviour and interactions. These are usually less time consuming and resource intensive compared with most ethnographic studies (Kozinets, 2010). The six steps of netnography are research planning, entrée, data collection, interpretation, ensuring ethical standards, and research representation (Kozinets, 2010:61). Following these steps, researchers can become part of the online community in order to observe and analyse naturally occurring behaviours as an insider.

The participative element of netnographies varies across a spectrum of researcher participation from solely ‘observational netnography’ to ‘autonetnography’ (Kozinets, 2006). Observational netnography is conducted by keeping track of online behaviours and activities without interacting with the participants (i.e. lurking). This method is preferred by researchers who do not want to enter or alter the online community (e.g. Brown et al., 2003). Autonetnography, on the other hand, can be conducted through pure participation where individuals reflect on their own experiences introspectively (Kozinets, 2006). The present

study employs participant-observational netnography which falls in the middle range on the spectrum. Participation-observational netnographies aim to balance the obtrusiveness and distance of the two extreme versions of netnography (Kozinets, 2006). With the participative element, researchers ensure that they can check interpretations and gain participants' perspectives on online interactions (James and Busher, 2009). They contribute to the community, but do not become involved in all types of community activity or influence the community (Kozinets, 2010). Clifford (1997, cited in James and Busher, 2009:31) explains the methodological and symbolic importance of researchers' engaging in fieldwork as:

- “(1) a long-term involvement of the research among people/communities using a variety of methods to contextualise their lives,
- (2) the ability of the researcher to become fully immersed into the community under study,
- (3) the presence and interaction with researcher in the social situation,
- (4) understanding the significance of the language and the actions occurring in the studied community”.

In the present study, the researcher's involvement was limited to reading posts regularly, following links, replying to other members and offering short comments (see Section 7.2.1.3).

Like ethnographies, netnographies can combine multiple methods of data collection such as surveys, interviews and journals (Kozinets, 2010). In-depth interviews have been used as part of ethnographies, since they help researchers to obtain deep understanding about the phenomena under study (Markham, 1998; Given, 2008). The present study hopes to achieve comprehensive descriptions with a combination of netnographic observations and interviews. The aim of integrating the two methods is to answer different aspects of the research question: *how* and *why*. More specifically, in the first stage, participant-observations were used to investigate online complaining behaviours, immerse the researcher in the context, and gain knowledge on the nature of online complaining. As the second stage of data collection, in-

depth interviews aimed to “bring in a detailed subjective understanding of the lived experience of online community participants”, “gain a detailed, grounded, subjective sense of online community members’ perspective and sense of meaning”, and “hear people’s recollections and interpretations of events” (Kozinets, 2010:47).

The integration of the two methods should be based on level of knowledge and level of explanation (Mason, 2002). Integration at the level of knowledge involves the use of identical or complementary epistemologies as the basis of different methods (Mason, 2002). The same methodological rule for the knowledge (i.e. constructionism, see Section 6.3) and the same form of interpretations were applied to both the observed data and interview transcripts. Integration at the level of explanation involves decisions regarding the construction of social explanations and generalisations (Mason, 2002). Although these two types of data sources might suggest arguments focusing on different aspects of the phenomenon, they were used to construct coherent and consistent explanations in relation to the research findings.

Sections 7.2.1 and 7.2.2 present more information on these two phases of data collection.

7.2.1. Phase I: Participant-Observations on Facebook

As a constructionist research study, the main aim is the understanding of the constructions of participants’ meanings (Crotty, 1998; Mason, 2002). Since observational methods are used to build explanations for naturally occurring behaviour through the use of interpretive data (Mason, 2002), they are used to explore how consumers complain on Facebook. Participant-observations are meaningful methods to generate knowledge and evidence of online complaining behaviours on Facebook.

The main objectives of the first stage are to (1) explore the nature of complaining on Facebook, (2) examine interactions on Facebook as a result of CCB among consumers and

with the company, (3) explore consumers' (perceived) objectives of complaining on Facebook, and (4) explore observed outcomes of complaining on Facebook. Additionally, observations were used to identify candidates for interviews and to prepare the interview guide.

The following subsections present the methodological issues around observations, including sampling, pilot study and methods of data collection.

7.2.1.1. Sampling

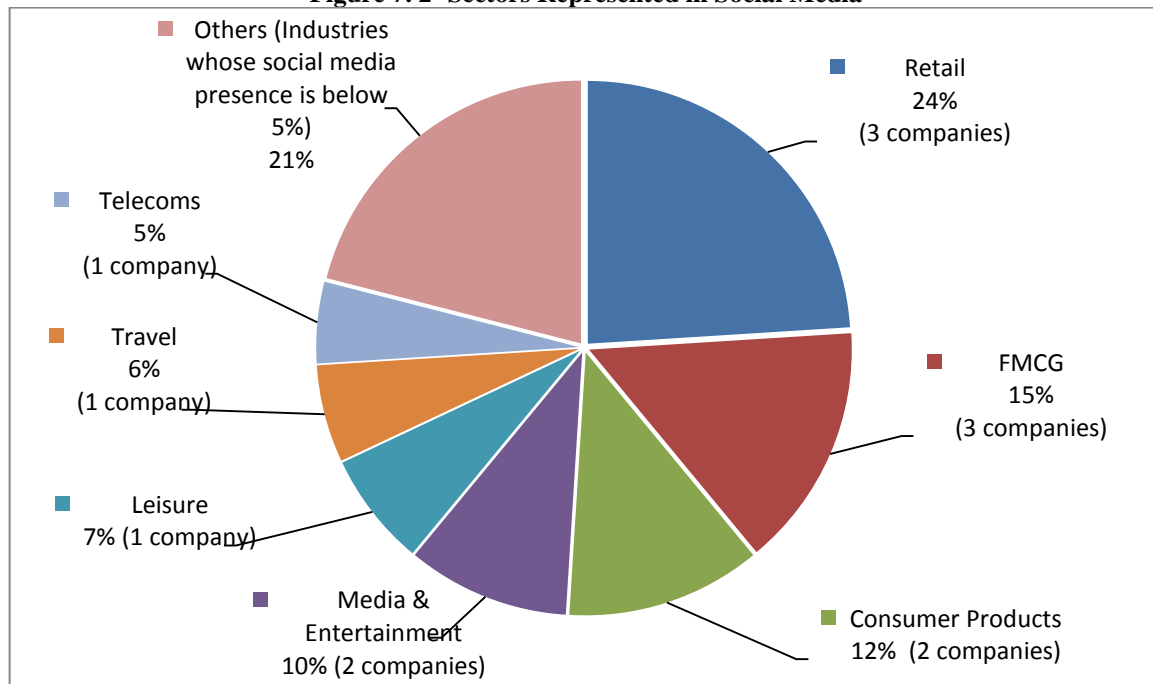
The next two subsections explain the process of sample selection for public and profile pages.

7.2.1.1.1. Sampling for Public Pages

As Hackley (2003:75) says “data gathering for interpretive research need not be random, but it does need to be systematic and/or theoretically informed”, because “in interpretative research the researcher seeks to arrive at insights for which he or she will offer as much evidence and reasoning as possible”. It was decided to use purposive sampling methods rather than probability sampling. Purposive sampling is based on informational, not statistical, considerations, and the purpose is to maximise information (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). It is useful when the objective of the sampling “is not to focus on the similarities that can be developed into generalisations, but to detail the many specifics that give the context its unique flavour” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:201). Spiggle (1994) suggests that a researcher should first identify the categories, constructs and conceptual linkages through preliminary analysis, and then should determine sample elements in order to control similarities and differences in their conditions and characteristics. This method works to ensure that all of the sample elements should be *relevant* to the objectives of study, but not *randomised* or *representative* (Mason, 2002). Therefore, studies that use purposive sampling should justify the selection criteria of sampling first.

Given that this study is about consumers' complaining behaviour on Facebook, it was necessary to identify the pages/groups with relevant discussion's as the sample elements. The first step was to determine which industries are represented on Facebook. In order to ensure distribution across industries, a study that explored the representation of different industry sectors in social media (Headstream, 2011) was employed. This study measured social media presence by examining companies' social activities in five social media platforms: (1) Facebook, (2) Twitter, (3) YouTube, (4) location based social networks such as FourSquare, and (5) each brand's own online community (Headstream, 2011). In order to ensure that the industries with the highest social media presence were used, seven industries whose social media presences are above 5% were selected. These are retail (24%), FMCG (15%), consumer products (12%), media and entertainment (10%), leisure (7%), travel (6%) and telecoms (5%). Since there is a significant difference between the percentages of the highest and lowest social media presence of the industries (24% for retail and 5% for telecom), instead of having equal representation of companies for each sector, it was decided to select three companies from the retail and FMCG sectors, two companies from consumer products and media/entertainment, and one from each of the leisure, travel and telecoms industries. Figure 7.2 shows the breakdown of these industries with the percentages of their social media presence.

Figure 7. 2- Sectors Represented in Social Media



Source: Social Brands 100 Report, Headstream (2011)

Since it is known that 87% of Fortune Global 100 companies use at least one popular social media platform (Burson-Marsteller, 2012), it was decided to use global companies. To select global companies belonging to the above industries, Financial Times Global 500 company list (FinancialTimes, 2011) was used. In order to keep the sample related to daily life items, luxury brands were eliminated. The researcher also chose to eliminate companies which do not operate in the UK, to ensure at a level of familiarity with the companies. Among the remaining companies in the list, 62 operate in the selected industries. To ensure a sample covering different areas of each industry, selection criteria were set for each industry individually:

Retail: Three types of retailer- food/grocery, fashion and online- were found constantly repeated in studies about socially online brands (e.g. Interbrand, 2010; Headstream, 2011), so it was decided to include one company from each of these areas.

FMCG: Based on preliminary observations and studies (Interbrand, 2010; Headstream, 2011), food producers and household goods were most often mentioned in social media, so it was decided to add companies that operate mainly in these areas.

Consumer Goods: Since electronics and sports equipment have a significant presence in social media, it was decided to include one company from each of these sectors.

Media/Entertainment: To ensure reasonable coverage, one Internet company and one television broadcasting company were included in the sample.

Leisure: In the Social Brands 100 Report (Headstream, 2011), this category consists of only restaurants/cafes and football clubs. In order to be able to have a sample that has a gender balance, it was decided to include one international restaurant/cafe chain, instead of a football club, assuming that football clubs' might have more male audience on Facebook.

Travel: With the assumption that low-cost (budget) airlines might generate more complaining than other travel companies, it was decided to include one low-cost airline in the sample.

Telecoms: To ensure a reasonable coverage, an international telecommunications company that operates in mobile communications was included in the sample.

The Financial Times Global 500 company list (2011) was used to identify companies that operate in the selected industries. In this list, companies are ranked by their stock market value, and their industry/sector provided. In order to select globally large companies, industry leaders of the six industries that fit the above selection criteria were chosen for the sample: Tesco, Amazon.com, Nestlé, Kraft Foods, Procter and Gamble (P&G), Apple, Nike, Google, British Sky Broadcasting (Sky), McDonald's and Vodafone.

However, two of the sectors- fashion retailers and low-cost airlines- are not represented in the FT Global 500 list. To select the fashion retailer, two studies about the use of social media-

Social Brands 100 Report (Headstream, 2011) and Best Global Brands 2010 (Interbrand, 2010)- were investigated. Gap, which has had a major complaining problem in social media (see Section 2.4.2) which was also in both these studies, was selected. Finally, Europe's largest low-cost airline, Ryanair (KeyNote, 2010), was added to the sample. The final list of companies in the sample and their corresponding sectors can be found in Table 7.1.

Table 7. 1- List of Companies Chosen for the Sample

Industry	#	Area	Company
Retail	1	Food Retailer	Tesco
	2	Fashion Retailer	Gap
	3	Online Retailer	Amazon.com
FMCG	4	Food	Nestlé
	5	Food	Kraft Foods
	6	Household Goods	Procter and Gamble (P&G)
Consumer Products	7	Electronics	Apple
	8	Sports Equipment	Nike
Media & Entertainment	9	TV	British Sky Broadcasting (Sky)
	10	Internet	Google
Leisure	11	Restaurant	McDonald's
Travel	12	Low-cost Airline	Ryanair
Telecom	13	Mobile telecom	Vodafone

Having selected the companies in the sample, the next step was to decide which Facebook pages and groups to use for data collection. In order to fulfil the requirements of the study's objectives, the sample should cover all six types of Facebook section discussed in Section 2.4.4 for each company: official brand page, unofficial brand page/group, anti-brand page/group, official product page, unofficial product page/group, and page/group with specific issues.

In order to select pages/groups suitable for the netnographic study, Kozinets' (2010) 'guidelines for site choice' were used. The selected pages/groups should be relevant, active,

interactive, substantial, heterogeneous and data-rich (Kozinets, 2010:89). These are discussed below:

Relevant: To find relevant Facebook pages/groups, Facebook's internal search engine was used. Official pages were identified by examining the information section of the page, and through links on the companies' websites. To find anti-brand pages/groups, company names were searched with negative words such as 'anti', 'no', 'boycott', 'sucks', 'against' and 'hate'. Pages/groups whose title or information section is not English were ignored.

Active: Only pages with available discussion sections were included in the sample. For example, McDonald's and Nike have official Facebook pages, but they do not allow users to post. Since members of these pages cannot post their comments on these pages, they were not included in the sample.

Interactive: To check interaction between users, pages that fit all other criteria were investigated for a month (see Section 7.2.1.2), and only those with a flow of communication between members were included in the sample.

Substantial: There is more than one Facebook page for some categories. Most of the companies have more than one user-created company page (e.g. Nike) and some have official pages for each of their products (e.g. Kraft). In these cases, the page/group with the most members was added to the sample to ensure a critical mass of communication.

Heterogeneous: To ensure a sufficient number of participants, only pages with more than 1,000 members were included in the sample.

Data-rich: Kozinets explains that pages/groups "offering more detailed or descriptively rich data" (2010:89) are good sources for netnography. He suggests that communities with long

and detailed postings might be more communal with more elaborate messages compared to short and perfunctory postings. Although the researcher acknowledges the importance of this criterion, it might cause the loss of some data in this study. Since the aim of the study is to explore the characteristics of consumers' online behaviours, selecting only groups with these characteristics (i.e. long posts, detailed posts, constant interaction between members) might mislead the findings about actual complaining patterns. Since Kozinets (2010:89) also suggests, "it might make good sense to trade off one or more of these criteria", instead of using only pages/groups with rich data, this criterion was interpreted as pages/groups that offer a variety of consumer discussions. Pages/groups that fitted the rest of the criteria were investigated for a month, and those not containing a variety of complaining were eliminated.

To summarise, in order to select the sample elements, first the sectors that use social media were identified. Then, using the Financial Times Global 500 list, companies were selected. Next, pages/groups from Facebook search results were explored to consider their compatibility with the study, and those that match with the Kozinets' guidelines (2010) and the study objectives were included in the sample. Originally, 53 pages/groups were selected for the sample. However, two weeks after the official data collection period started, three of the pages from the sample were deleted. These were unofficial brand pages/groups of Tesco, Apple and Google. It is possible that the creators of these pages decided to end the page or deleted their Facebook accounts. However, it might also be Facebook that deleted these pages because according to the Facebook user agreement only legal representatives of companies and organisations can create pages. In order to find other pages for the sample, another Facebook search was conducted, and 'apple :)' was added as the sample as the unofficial brand page, but it was not possible to find unofficial pages with the selected characteristics for Tesco and Google. Therefore, the final sample for this study consisted of 51 pages/groups.

Table 7.2 shows the selected pages and groups. Empty cells imply that at the time of study either there was no page/group in that particular category or the existing pages/groups of that category did not match Kozinets' criteria.

Table 7. 2- Public Pages/Groups in the Sample

	Tesco	Gap	Amazon	Kraft	Nestle	P&G	Nike	Apple	Sky	Google	McDonald's	Ryanair	Vodafone
Official brand page	Tesco	Gap	Amazon.com	Kraft - Corporation	Nestle	Procter & Gamble			Sky	Google			Vodafone UK
Unofficial brand page or group			AMAZON		Nestle		Nike	apple :)			Mc donalds	Ryanair	
Anti-brand page or group				People Against Kraft	Boycott Nestle		Boycott Nike	I hate Apple			I hate McDonalds!	i hate ryanair	Can we find 1 million people who will never use Vodafone (again)?
Official product page	Clothing at Tesco	Banana Republic	Amazon Kindle	Cadbury Dairy Milk	Kit Kat	Pampers	Nike Football	iTunes	Sky Sports	Google Chrome			
Unofficial product page or group	Tesco Value Vodka	Baby Gap	Kindle...	Cadbury	Aero	OLAY		iPhone		Google Earth	Mcdonalds Fries		vodafone 3G
Page or group with a specific issue	Why does the Tesco in Selly Oak always smell bad???			WE HATE KRAFT FOR TAKING OVER CADBURYs	Can this orangutan get more fans than Nestle?	Boycott Procter & Gamble AND Pampers for chemical burns on little babies!	Boycott Nike for Signing Michael Vick	Dear iPhone/iPod: I know I have 20% left! Thanks for messing my game up!!		Dear Google can you let me write my sentence before u start guessing it	I hate it when i get coke in my cup of ice at mcdonaldss		i have no reception is code for "Im with vodafone"

7.2.1.1.2. Sampling for Profile Pages

As discussed in Chapter 2, Facebook users can limit the audience of their profile pages. By default, Facebook settings allow friends and friends of friends to see and browse profile pages. However, Facebook users usually change this setting in a way to provide access only to their Facebook friends for security and privacy reasons. For this reason, the researcher has access to the profile pages of all of her Facebook friends, but ability to access to the rest of the profiles is unknown. Therefore, it was decided to use a convenience sampling for the profile

pages. At the time of data collection, the researcher had 545 friends on Facebook, and these became the sample for this part of research.

7.2.1.2. Pilot Study/ Entrée

As part of the first step of netnography, *entrée*, Kozinets (2010) suggests that researchers explore and familiarise themselves with the online communities that they plan to study. In this way, researchers can obtain information about the community and shape or reshape the research design accordingly. This period is similar to conducting a pilot study. In the present study, the pilot study/*entrée* lasted two months. Following Kozinets' (2010) suggestions, this period was used to (1) confirm the pages/groups are appropriate for this research, (2) become familiar with the pages/groups that matched the sampling guidelines (see Section 7.2.1.1), (3) become familiar with the CAQDAS (i.e. computer-assisted qualitative data analysis) program, (4) shape ways to approach the community, and (5) consider data collection strategies.

7.2.1.3. Data Collection

Mason (2002) defines the purpose of observation in qualitative research as to witness or experience what is going on in a setting. In netnographic studies, data collection is also linked with communicating with members of the online community. As discussed above, in participant-observational netnography, the researcher participates in some community activities and interacts with members (Kozinets, 2010). In the present study, the researcher's participation included:

- Joining the 51 pages/groups in the sample.

- Actively following discussions and interactions on these pages/groups (i.e. reading messages regularly, learning about the community culture, browsing links and photos shared by members and taking fieldnotes).

-Contributing to discussions and interactions on these groups and pages (e.g. offering short comments, asking questions, and ‘liking’ content).

-Actively following her Facebook newsfeed (i.e. the section that broadcasts friends’ activities) to browse and identify friends’ posts with complaints.

-Contributing to discussions and interactions on profile pages (i.e. offering short comments, asking questions, and ‘liking’ content).

In netnography, researchers can collect three types of data: archival data which are existing information in the community, elicited data which are the data that the researcher co-creates through their interactions with other members, and fieldnote data which are the researcher’s own notes about the observations (Kozinets, 2010). In the present study, the researcher collected these three types of data. Archival data were collected by following users’ posts and communications regularly. Each page/group was visited twice a week for five months between August 2011 and December 2011. Every time a page/group was visited, all new posts and comments were observed and recorded. Negative posts (e.g. comments, remarks, notes, and photos) that evidence criticism towards the company, its products, services, practices, employees and marketing activities were treated as complaining. Non-English posts and spam were ignored. Elicited data were collected where the researcher interacted with members about a complaining activity. In order to keep elicited data minimal, and not alter complaining behaviours, the researcher did not actively involve herself in complaining activities on the public pages, but rather communicated with members of the pages/groups about other relevant subjects. Fieldnotes were taken simultaneously during the observations on patterns of complaining behaviours, community activities, and the researcher’s reflections (Bryman, 2008).

A total of 684 posts and their comments were saved in NVivo. Eighty eight of these were from profiles and the rest from public pages. Two methods were used simultaneously to capture and save archival and elicited data. First, the text- the initial post, comments and replies to the post- was copied and pasted into NVivo 8.0 without recording personal information of Facebook users. Second, screen images were captured so as to save visual elements of the pages/groups. Although not used directly for the data analysis, screenshots were an important element of the study to help understand consumer behaviour fully. With the help of screenshots, researchers can use visual cues (images, colours, and graphics) to experience community participation in the way in which members of the community experience it (Kozinets, 2010). Additionally, fieldnotes were recorded directly into NVivo simultaneously with the observations.

7.2.2. Phase II: In-Depth Interviews with Facebook Users

In-depth interviews as methods of understanding participants are interpretivist approaches (Mason, 2002). Since the epistemological and ontological position of this study, constructionism, suggests that reality and meanings are constructed by individuals (Crotty, 1998), it was decided to use interviews as the second stage of data collection. Interviews are a common qualitative research method that aims to explore participants' knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations and experiences (Bryman, 2008). Hence they are also considered as legitimate and meaningful methods of data generation in this study (Mason, 2002).

Computer-mediated communications provide new methods for conducting interviews, but these hold the same core methodological issues and use similar data collection techniques as traditional media (Mann and Stewart, 2000). Considering that Facebook users are geographically dispersed, it was decided to conduct interviews online, giving an opportunity

to reach research participants who would have been difficult to contact otherwise (Markham, 2004; James and Busher, 2009). Other benefits of online interviews include being cheaper to conduct compared with offline interviews that require travelling expenses, the ability to create less stressful interviewing situations for the participants (e.g. being able to attend the interview in their house), and the ability to schedule at the convenience of participants (Gruber et al., 2008b). Online interviews can provide data similar to offline interviews. Computer-mediated communications can be used to transfer information easily and establish interpersonal relationships (Walther, 1992; Mann and Stewart, 2000). Especially on SNSs, communication is linked to user profiles which provide information through various textual and visual data: users have clues to help them to understand each other compared with email and anonymous chat rooms (Kozinets, 2010).

The main objectives of the second stage are to (1) articulate consumers' objectives for complaining on Facebook, (2) describe the organisational, situational and technological factors influencing CCB on Facebook, (3) identify at which stages in the complaint process consumers prefer to complain on Facebook, (4) explore outcomes of complaining on Facebook, and (5) provide an understanding of consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction following online complaining on Facebook.

The next subsections discuss the methodological issues around the online interviews including participant recruitment, interviewing mediums, pilot study and methods of data collection.

7.2.2.1. Interviewing Mediums

The Internet offers different ways of conducting interviews: these can be synchronous or asynchronous (O'Connor et al., 2008; James and Busher, 2009). Since synchronous interviews

provide a real-time nature of exchange (O'Connor et al., 2008), greater spontaneity, and aid the relationship development process between the interviewer and participant (Chen and Hinton, 1999), they were preferred in this study. Synchronous online interviews can be conducted via text-, audio- and video-based chat (Gruber et al., 2008b; Kozinets, 2010). As James and Busher (2009:132) explain,

“the use of the Internet for interviews depends on the willingness of participants to use this medium. In part, this may be linked to the myths and fears people hold about the Internet, as well as the practicalities about their ease of access to it or their familiarity with it”.

Therefore, the researcher decided to leave the choice of interviewing medium (i.e. text, audio, or video) to the interviewees in order to ensure that they were comfortable with how the interview was conducted.

Text-based interviews have limitations in terms of the quality of communication due to the lack of physical clues (Markham, 2004). Video interviews allow the reading and recording of social cues such as body language and gestures (Kozinets, 2010). Additionally, on both video and audio interviews, oral dimensions of language help the researcher to understand whether what was said has other meanings such as doubt, irony or confidence (Mann and Stewart, 2000). This helps both the interviewee and interviewer by allowing them to assess how the other interprets what they said, the genuineness of intent, appropriateness of questions, and meaningfulness of answers (Mann and Stewart, 2000). Therefore, the priority of the researcher was to use video interviews, as these create the closest conditions to face-to-face interviews.

Although online written conversations are similar to voice conversations in some ways (e.g. users have to wait for their turn), researchers need to be aware of the different aspects of

online conversations to overcome the limitations of written conversations. Firstly, online communities and cultures might have special etiquette for online behaviours and communications, referred to as 'netiquette'. By following netiquette, researchers ensure that they will comply with what is considered appropriate, polite and respectful behaviour by participants (James and Busher, 2009). Second, emoticons (also known as smileys) can be used for communicating feelings and other responses, which might help to build rapport (Gruber et al., 2008b). Third, due to the absence of visual clues, researchers also need to assure participants that they are listening. Responding promptly to questions, asking follow-up questions, the use of emoticons, and other linguistic features such as abbreviations (e.g. 'LOL', laugh out loud, to show something funny was said) can help to create an impression of listening (Mann and Stewart, 2000). Nevertheless, text-based interviews also have benefits over video interviews. Since text-based interviews produce transcripts automatically, they are immediately available for analysis (Mann and Stewart, 2000; Gruber et al., 2008b). Moreover, the researcher can see the flow of conversation on the screen, so it is possible to attend to the messages more than once, and craft follow-up questions accordingly (Markham, 2004).

7.2.2.2. Recruiting Participants

In order to present insights that offer as much reasoning as possible, interviews were conducted with consumers who actually complained on Facebook pages/groups in the sample and on their profiles (Hackley, 2003). Hence, purposive sampling methods were employed in this part of the study. Consumers who had recently complained on Facebook were identified during the observations, and were approached via Facebook messages. The representativeness of the interviewees was guaranteed using two selection criteria: (1) participants were selected from all six Facebook sections, and (2) preliminary data analysis from the first stage was used

to identify different types of complaining behaviour so that interview participants with different behaviours (e.g. different reasons to complain) could be selected.

The first message sent to interview candidates explained the purpose of the study, provided a link to the researcher's profile on Facebook and the university's website, and invited the user to participate in the interview (Appendix 7.1). If the candidate replied to this message with the intentions of participating, a second message was then sent to explain the research and ethical considerations, and ask for consent (Appendix 7.2).

Building up good relationships with interviewees is always important for the success of the interview (Arksey and Knight, 1999; Bryman, 2008). Considering the absence of social signals, establishing rapport and trust is especially important in online interviewing settings (James and Busher, 2009). In order to establish trust in online research, Mann and Steward (2000) propose openness about the research, and self-disclosure. Hence, the researcher provided information on the research and herself as a Ph.D. student (e.g. information on her educational background, photos taken on the university campus) through her Facebook page and her profile on the university website. Providing personal information aims to create similar conditions to face-to-face interviewing situations (O'Connor et al., 2008). Additionally, Arksey and Knight's (1999:102) suggestions for fostering rapport in interviews such as "being friendly, polite and open", "asking for permission to tape the interview", "listening and making eye contact", and "being sensitive to signs of emotional reaction" were followed.

7.2.2.3. Pilot Interviews

Conducting a pilot study is crucial for the success of in-depth interviews (Arksey and Knight, 1999; Hackley, 2003), giving the researcher the chance to (1) test the method and questions, (2) fix any problems (Arksey and Knight, 1999), (3) ensure the sample is appropriate, and (4)

practise the interview (Hackley, 2003). In the present study, three interviews- one text-based, and two video-interviews- were conducted as part of the pilot stage. The pilot interviews were successful, and provided sufficient data, so were added to the final dataset. However, after the pilot interviews the order of topics to be discussed was changed for a smoother flow of conversation, and some questions were rephrased for the convenience of the participants.

7.2.2.4. Data Collection

Data collection for the second phase included conducting in-depth interviews online with consumers who complained on Facebook, using their preferred interview medium. If participants preferred video-based interviews, Skype was used to conduct interviews. An additional software program called 'vEmotion Call Recorder' was used to record the interview and the researcher transcribed the interviews manually afterwards. With participants who preferred text-based interviews, Facebook chat or Windows Live Messenger (MSN) were used. In some cases, a mutually convenient time or interview channel could not be arranged with the participant, especially with those in different time zones. In these cases, a set of questions was sent via email. As O'Conner et al. (2008) note, emails are useful for conducting interviews with participants located in different time zones, however they are limited in terms of follow-up questions. Although this was not part of the original research design, the researcher felt that it was important not to lose any participants, and accepted to conduct email interviews with some. In these cases, a follow-up email with probing questions was also sent.

According to this study's view knowledge and evidence are contextual and situational concepts (see Chapter 6). Hence, instead of abstract questions, participants were probed to express specific circumstances and their experiences. It is hoped that a situated knowledge is generated by asking different questions to different participants (Mason, 2002). The

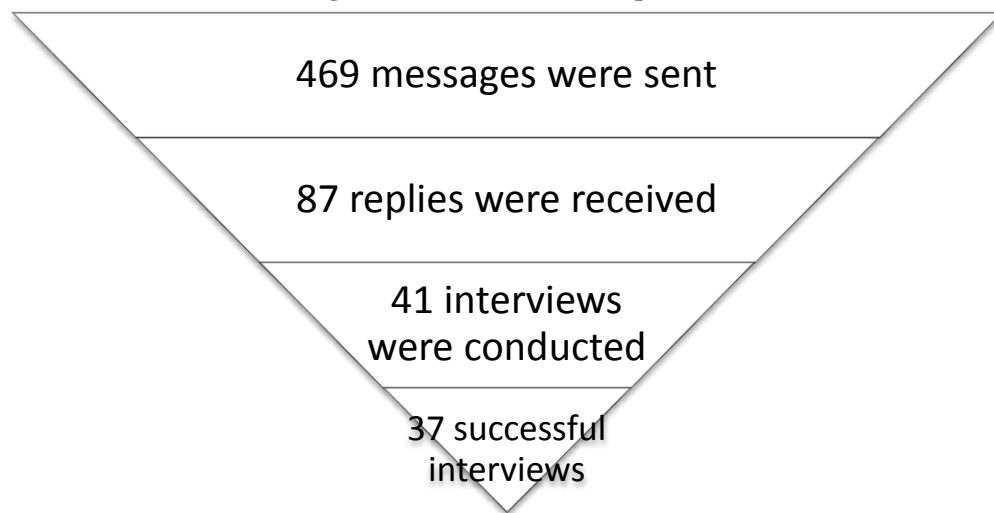
researcher probed and prompted participants to obtain elaboration, clarification and specific details (Arksey and Knight, 1999). An interview guide was prepared before the interviews. It is used as a “list of memory prompts of areas to be covered” (Bryman, 2008:442), rather than a structured questionnaire (Appendix 7.3). The interview guide was reiterated and necessary additions made before each interview so as design it according to particular post and not to miss an important aspect of the participant’s complaining activity.

The researcher also prepared ‘information sheets’ about participants before each interview to be used as an aid during the interview. These were similar to Gruber et al.’s (2008b) ‘participation cards’ which contained information about participants’ demographics and background to the research topic, aiming to help the researcher to build rapport and ease during the interview (Gruber et al., 2008b). In the present research, information sheets contained demographics of the participant (if known), a copy of the participants’ complaining post(s), and information about the particular Facebook section(s) the participant used. The researcher also consulted guidelines for qualitative interviewing by Arksey and Knight (1999) and guidelines for online interviewing by Markham (2004) and James and Busher (2009) to prepare for interviews. For example, Markham’s (2004) suggestion that suggested that text-based interviews take double the time of voice interviews was taken into consideration in preparing the interview schedules.

Calls for interviews were sent out until the data saturation was achieved. That is, interviews were stopped when no new or relevant information seemed to be emerging, enough interviews were conducted with the participants from various Facebook sections, and every category seemed to be well developed (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). A total of 469 messages were sent to Facebook users to invite them for interview. As Figure 7.3 shows, 87 (18.87%) replied, and 70 (80.45%) originally agreed to participate in the interview. However, 29 of these decided to

not to participate after receiving more information about the study, or did not reply to the researcher again. In total, 41 interviews were conducted. Four (two text-based and two email) were not included in the dataset due to insufficient information being obtained. The final dataset contains 16 text-based interviews, 14 video interviews, and 7 email interviews. The average time of the video interviews was 51 minutes, and for the text-based interviews 85 minutes. Two sample interview transcripts are provided in Appendix 7.4 and 7.5, and the rest are available upon request.

Figure 7. 3- Interview Participation



7.2.2.5. Profile of Participants

The 37 interview participants comprised 22 female and 15 male. They were based in countries including the UK (13 participants), USA (9), Turkey (4) and Australia (3). Table 7.3 provides information on research participants' profiles including their pseudonyms, country, gender, preferred interview medium, Facebook section type that they complained on, and name of the page/group that they complained on.

Table 7. 3- Interview Participants' Profile

Participant	Country	Gender	Interview Type	Section Type	Name of the Section
Alexis	Switzerland	Male	Text-based	Official brand page	Nestlé
Ayse	USA	Female	Video-based	Profile Page	Profile Page
Derin	UK	Female	Video-based	Profile Page	Profile Page
Tugba	Turkey	Female	Video-based	Profile Page	Profile Page
Berna	UK	Female	Video-based	Profile Page	Profile Page
Emre	Turkey	Male	Text-based	Profile Page	Profile Page
Mark	Morocco	Male	Video-based	Official product page	iTunes
Donna	USA	Female	Text-based	Official product page	Amazon Kindle
Netje	Thailand	Female	Video-based	Profile Page	Profile Page
Melinda	UK	Female	Video-based	Unofficial brand page/group	Ryanair
Megan	Australia	Female	Email	Issue specific page/group	i have no reception is code for "Im with vodafone"
Selin	Turkey	Female	Video-based	Profile Page	Profile Page
Barbara	UK	Female	Text-based	Anti-brand page/group	Nestle Boycott
Flor	Brazil	Female	Text-based	Official brand page	Amazon
Matt	Australia	Male	Email	Unofficial brand page/group	Ryanair
Sedat	Turkey	Male	Video-based	Profile Page	Profile Page
Charlie	USA	Male	Video-based	Unofficial brand page/group	Nike
Jimmy	USA	Male	Text-based	Official brand page	Google
Liam	UK	Male	Text-based	Anti-brand page/group	I hate apple
Kate	UK	Female	Text-based	Official product page	Clothing at Tesco
Dave	UK	Male	Text-based	Official brand page	SKY
Addison	Canada	Male	Text-based	Official brand page	Amazon
Nolan	USA	Male	Text-based	Official product page	Banana Republic
Lilly	UK	Female	Text-based	Official brand page	SKY
Audrey	UK	Female	Text-based	Official product page	Clothing at Tesco
Olivia	USA	Female	Text-based	Official brand page	Nestlé
Caroline	UK	Female	Text-based	Official brand page	Tesco
Hannah	Australia	Female	Text-based	Official brand page	Vodafone
Katie	UK	Female	Text-based	Official brand page	Tesco
Gareth	UK	Male	Video-based	Anti-brand page/group	Boycott Nestle
Jessica	South Africa	Female	Email	Issue specific page/group	Boycott Nike for Signing Michael Vick
Kellian	USA	Male	Email	Issue specific page/group	Boycott Nike for Signing Michael Vick
Manuel	Argentina	Male	Video-based	Anti-brand page/group	I hate apple
Paul	UK	Male	Video-based	Official product page	Cadbury
Oscar	Spain	Male	Video-based	Anti-brand page/group	I hate ryanair
Amber	USA	Female	Email	Anti-brand page/group	I hate McDonalds
Amy	USA	Female	Email	Unofficial brand page/group	Mc Donalds

7.3. Analysis of Qualitative Data

This section describes the data analysis methods employed in this study. Netnographic data analysis is defined as turning collected products, including fieldnotes, textual and graphical files, interview transcripts and screenshots, into a finished research representation (Kozinets, 2010). Netnographic data analysis follows inductive approaches. Traditional qualitative analysis processes such as coding, noting and comparing can be used as part of netnographic

analysis (Kozinets, 2010). Since qualitative content analysis can be used to analyse textual data to answer how and why questions (Given, 2008), the present study used qualitative content analysis methods based on interpretive approaches. Qualitative content analysis involves scanning the material, and analysing in order to discover themes (Bryman, 2008). It is a systematic and analytic method, but not rigid in terms of the coding: new categories, and codes can emerge through the investigation of data during the study (Altheide, 1996). Consumers' posts containing complaints, including comments from others and companies that belong to the original post, fieldnotes and interview transcripts were coded. Codes were developed from the literature and the research findings. Interpretive analysis aims to construct or document a version of what the researcher interprets the data to mean or represent (Mason, 2002). Hence categories of codes emerged through the readings of the material, based on what the researcher inferred from the data (Mason, 2002).

Computer aided qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) software NVivo 8.0 was used for coding. Such programs can help to manage large numbers of categories efficiently (Mason, 2002). They can store different file types (pictures, text and hyperlinks) and create links amongst them. NVivo 8.0 was used to save, store, retrieve and code in this study. The items stored in NVivo were: (1) complaining posts and comments, (2) fieldnotes, (3) interview transcripts, and (4) correspondence with participants. Data were read several times first to achieve familiarisation, and then to grasp the meanings. Parts of text believed to represent behaviours, attitudes, understandings and actions were coded as well as the characteristics of the discourse of the message. Finally, these were linked with the Facebook sections and five complaining actions from the Integrated Model of CCB to ease analysis. After completing coding of all of the material, the researcher analysed the material by interpreting codes, forging interconnections, identifying themes and reflecting on findings.

7.4. Ethical Considerations

One of the six steps of conducting netnography is ensuring that ethical procedures are successfully followed. This section describes the ethical considerations accompanying this study and explains the practices adopted to overcome these. Kozinets (2010:140) identifies the major areas to address in conducting an ethical netnography as “(1) identifying yourself and informing relevant constituents about your research, (2) asking for appropriate permissions, (3) gaining consent where needed, and (4) properly citing and crediting culture members”.

Identifying and Explaining: As Kozinets (2010) explains, honesty between the researcher and community members is necessary to ensure ethical research that facilitates mutual trust and rapport, and protects participants from online harm. This research did not require any deception. The researcher fully disclosed her presence, information about the research, and her affiliation on every page/group in the sample, and on her profile page before starting data collection. A link to a University of Birmingham webpage providing more explanation about the study and the researcher was also shared. However, the researcher acknowledges that because of the structure of Facebook, some page/group members might not notice these posts. Therefore, this information was also shared with community members and participants with every new correspondence.

Permissions: Since Facebook is a commercial website, ethical implications of using it for research purposes were considered during the planning of this study (Bryman, 2008; Kozinets, 2010). For this purpose, Facebook’s ‘Statement of Rights and Responsibilities’ (dated October 2010) and ‘Privacy Policy’ (dated December 2010) were examined as the most up-to-date documents at the time of data collection. The Statement of Rights and Responsibilities stated that in case of collecting information from other users, Facebook users should obtain

consent, identify themselves and explain how the information was collected. Since this complies with the procedures of this study, no additional action was necessary.

The research underwent review of and obtained permission from the University of Birmingham's Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee. During the application process, the researcher familiarised herself with the University's 'Code of Practice for Research 2010-2011', and consulted this document during the research design. For example, participants were advised that they could withdraw from the research whenever they wanted without any cost, and access to all collected data was password-protected at all times.

Informed Consent: This study involved two types of data collection; participant-observations and in-depth interviews. Netnographic observations were conducted on Facebook sections where the researcher informed community members about the research. Since (1) the research was conducted in the public domain, (2) it did not present harm to Facebook users, and (3) no personal information regarding Facebook users was gathered, informed consent was not sought for this part of the study (Hewson et al., 2003; Kozinets, 2010). However, in order to use direct quotations, participants' consent was asked through the Facebook messaging facility, explaining the research and ethical considerations (Appendix 7.2). This aimed to ensure explicit permission, and avoid quoting out of context due to misinterpretation (Sharf, 1998). Additionally, informed consent was collected from 41 interviewees through the Facebook messaging facility. Participants were informed about the researcher's identity, the research, their rights and the researcher's responsibilities (Appendix 7.2) (Hewson et al., 2003; James and Busher, 2009).

This kind of online consent where an electronic copy of the consent form is presented to the participant is defined as 'implied consent' (Walther, 2002; Kozinets, 2010). There are some

considerations around obtaining implied consent due to the lack of information regarding the age, knowledge, competency and comprehension of the participant, and the possibility of participants deceiving the researcher (O'Connor et al., 2008). However, as Hewson et al. (2003) note, researchers can easily detect fraudulence during interactions with participants in most online research settings. Moreover, these kinds of difficulties are present in offline research as well (Walther, 2002). Given that the present study does not use any sensitive data, and there is no risk associated with the study, using simple language in the consent material was considered sufficient.

Citing and Crediting: As with every research project, researchers need to ensure the confidentiality and the anonymity of their participants in online studies as well (Sharf, 1998; James and Busher, 2009). This study does not require the collection of any identifiable information, and all other information was anonymised using pseudonyms and appropriately cited. The only foreseen risk is the possibility of tracing online quotations back to participants using search engines (e.g. Google). When researchers use an online quotation directly from a website, it is possible to trace this to its original posting and locate the pseudonym (Kozinets, 2006; James and Busher, 2009; Kozinets, 2010). On Facebook, the competency of search engines depends on the privacy setting of the page/group. If the page/group is visible to everybody, search engines are able to locate quotations, and so data can be traced back to the Facebook user. However, if the page/group is set to be visible only to members of the group, search engines cannot locate information. This setting is controlled by the owner/creator of the group/page. Official pages are mostly open to everybody, and some user-created groups are set only to be visible to their members. This was explained to the participants when their consent was sought, and they were advised to not to give consent if they did not want quotations to be traced back to their real names.

7.5. Methodological Limitations

This section explains the methodological limitations arising from the nature of computer-mediated communications and researcher's decisions regarding the use of methods.

First and foremost, the researcher's involvement in the first phase of data collection (i.e. participant-observation) might be considered as an unnatural influence to the online community. However, as Kozinets (2006) suggests, a careful and considerate researcher's likelihood of changing participants' behaviour is small compared to the value of losing profound insights. Even though the researcher participated simultaneously with the observations, the possible shortcomings of this participation were recognised, and she acted with caution.

Secondly, the authenticity of participants' identities in online research might be problematic. Although this is not likely on Facebook due to the use of real names, participants can express themselves in a way that does not match their actual identity, as Internet users often do in virtual communities (Turkle, 1996; Hine, 2000). Although recognising the authenticity problem as a limitation, this research regards participants' online identities and interactions as their authentic online self (Hine, 2000). Given that the main objective of this study is to understand online behaviours, investigating the authentic online identities of the participants complies with the purpose of the study.

Lastly, due to the impossibility of mapping the Facebook population to conduct probability sampling, purposive and convenience sampling methods were used. Purposive sampling is common in ethnographies; researchers should try to gain access to varied individuals who are relevant to the research question to avoid problems associated with purposive sampling (Bryman, 2008). However, among the three samplings in this study (i.e. sampling for public

pages, sampling for profile pages and participant selection for interviews), sampling for profile pages, which is convenience sampling, seems to be the most limited. Since Facebook privacy settings do not allow users to browse strangers' profiles, only existing Facebook friends of the researcher were used as the sample. Although it is a relatively large sample, the researcher recognises that the representativeness of this sample might be limited.

Other limitations occurred due to the selection of methods. Firstly, the researcher left the choice of interview medium to the participants. Sixteen of the research participants preferred video-based interview, but fourteen interviews were conducted through text-based chat, and seven via email. As expected, lack of visual and audio contact during text interviews created some problems. Firstly, due to the difference between the nature of written and spoken communications, these types of interviews have limitations (Bryman, 2008; Kozinets, 2010). Moreover, the researcher cannot fully control the interview process in text interviews. External distractions can interrupt the interview or distract the participant (Gruber et al., 2008b; James and Busher, 2009). Not being able to recognise these problems, the researcher's apprehension of participants' input might be inaccurate. Lastly, text-based interviews might give better results with participants who can type fast (Markham, 2004). Similar problems occurred with the participants who could not type fast. Since they needed longer time to answer questions, it was difficult for the researcher to know if they had finished answering the previous question, had left the interview or were still typing.

A final limitation arose from the Facebook messaging facility. Facebook directs messages from strangers (everybody except friends and friends of friends) to a folder called 'other' rather than the inbox to prevent spamming. Some Facebook users might not know about this or might not check their 'other' folder regularly. Hence it is possible that some interview candidates might not have been able to receive the invitation to interview. This might be one

of the reasons for the low response rate for the interviews and inability to obtain permission to use some quotations. To solve the problem with low response rates, the researcher published a call for participants in the University of Birmingham's 'Research Volunteers Digest', and asked participants to refer their friends if they knew somebody who used Facebook to complain. However, these two methods were not successful. Later, follow-up messages were sent to interview candidates who responded to the first message but did not reply afterwards, to ask whether they still wanted to participate. In seven cases, these follow-up messages were successful, and interviews were conducted with these participants.

7.6. Conclusion

This chapter has described and reviewed the methodological considerations and research design adopted by this study. The first section described netnography as the research methodology and discussed its main characteristics. A participant-observational netnography was employed that uses the benefits of experiencing the actual participation. Online observations were used to explore how consumers complain on Facebook. The researcher used her Facebook friends' profiles to investigate profile pages, and sampled 51 Facebook pages/groups to investigate public Facebook sections. These were explored for five months to understand consumers' online CCB. After the first stage, online in-depth interviews were conducted to explore why consumers complain on Facebook. In total 37 interviews (16 text-, 14 video-, and 7 email-based) were conducted. Next, the methods of data analysis and ethical considerations of this study were described. Finally, methodological limitations arising from the nature of computer-mediated communications and the use of methods were discussed and their implications were recognised. Chapters 8 and 9 present the research findings from the first and second stages of data collection respectively.

CHAPTER 8- RESEARCH FINDINGS I: ONLINE OBSERVATIONS

8.1. Introduction

As was described in Chapter 7, a multi-method research design with two data collection phases was employed in this study. Findings from these two phases are presented separately in Chapters 8 and 9. Chapter 8 reports research findings from the first stage of data collection: netnographic observations. Netnographic observations were conducted on 51 pages/groups for five months following Kozinets (2010) guidelines for netnographic studies. Additionally, status messages on the profiles of 545 Facebook users were examined in order to identify posts with relevant content. At the end of data collection, the dataset included 684 posts (596 from pages/groups and 88 from profiles). A combination of the information from dataset and fieldnotes were used to analyse and present the findings in this chapter. Verbatim quotations were presented to show the actual posts from consumers. These were directly copied from Facebook without any corrections on syntax and grammar.

Research findings are presented as follows. Section 8.2 explores the way consumers use Facebook to complain focusing on the characteristics of their behaviours. Section 8.3 presents the types of the problems that evoke complaining on Facebook. The interactions as a result of CCB among consumers and interactions involving the company are presented in Section 8.4. Section 8.5 focuses on perceived objectives of complaining posts on Facebook, and the final section discusses observed outcomes of the complaining activities on Facebook.

8.2. The Nature of Complaining Behaviour on Facebook

The aim of this section is to present the nature of CCB on Facebook. Complaining on Facebook is not restricted by forms or text boxes. Consumers can use text based content,

photos and videos to complain. There are no limitations in terms of the length of the text when posting on Facebook. Complaining posts varied between one sentence posts and long paragraphs. Users talked about their experiences, feelings, opinions and/or used factual data about the companies and products. Not every consumer followed punctuation, grammar and capitalisation rules, and some posts did not even contain any vowels in the text. Also while complaining on Facebook, consumers did not always create their own text. In some cases, consumers preferred to use texts from other sources. There are two types of these posts. First, consumers used information from other websites by copying some or all of the text/photos and pasting it directly on Facebook. For example, one consumer complained about the latest version of iPhone by directly copying the negative comments of a technology critic from his personal blog. Some of these posts included references, but others used the material without clarifying the source. In the latter case, it was not easy for readers to identify the source of the text. The second type is the texts that were prepared for collective use on Facebook. These were very easy to identify because they were usually long texts that were posted by a lot of different consumers. In one case, a post about animal testing was posted 61 times in a day on Nestlé's official page, and continued to be posted by different people for a number of days. Google search engine was used to identify the source of the original material in these cases. These were usually consumer communities or NGOs (e.g. Greenpeace) that organise campaigns or complaining activities on Facebook. They usually prepared a text that explains the situation with details and links to other informative websites. Consumers then would copy this text and paste it on Facebook. Some examples for these posts can be found in Appendix 8.1.

Mobile phones with camera options make it easier for consumers to take photos and videos when they encounter problems or poor conditions. When consumers post photos or videos,

they can also add their comments to these posts. The dataset includes posts with photos showing broken or defective products (e.g. Nestlé, Apple) and inappropriate store conditions (e.g. Gap, McDonald's), and videos of broken or defective products (e.g. Kraft, Amazon) and problems with employees (e.g. Ryanair)⁵. When consumers posted photos, they usually added text to these posts to explain or emphasize some points. Also, posts with photos from stores had the information where and sometimes when the photo was taken.

Additionally, some consumers adopted creative methods when they complained on Facebook. For example, they included humorous approaches and/or used sarcastic discourses, and some others generated their own picture or video content. The consumers who generated their own content usually complained about situations that concerned the general public rather than personal matters. For example, one of the interviewees in the second stage (Charlie) combined a photo of Nike factory employees with the tagline 'Nike factory workers in Indonesia make \$12.8 month', and posted this illustration with an additional text to show his concerns about this issue on one of the unofficial pages of Nike (Appendix 8.2).

Each separate post that contained a complaint, and the replies to that post, was regarded as an individual incident. In total, 596 incidents were collected on public sections and 88 incidents on profiles. Table 8.1 shows the distribution of these posts over Facebook sections. 395 of these posts are from official pages (67.17%), and 201 of them are from user-created pages/groups (32.82%). This suggests that official pages were used more frequently than user-created ones for complaining purposes.

⁵ Permission to use these photographs or videos could not been obtained from the post owners and are therefore not included.

Table 8. 1- Distribution of Incidents from Dataset over Facebook Sections

Type	Section	Number of posts
Company created pages	Official Brand Pages	259
	Official Product Pages	136
Profiles	Profile pages (status)	88
User-created pages/ groups	Unofficial Brand Pages	98
	Anti-brand Pages	46
	Specific Issue Related	31
	Unofficial Product Pages	26

The next subsections explore CCB on public sections (i.e. official brand and product pages, unofficial brand and product pages, anti-brand pages and issue-specific pages) and profile pages respectively.

8.2.1. Complaining on Public Pages/Groups

There are various sections and tools on Facebook that can be used for publicly complaining as described in Chapter 2. Observations on public sections were conducted on six types of Facebook sections: ‘official brand pages’, ‘unofficial brand pages/groups’, ‘anti-brand pages/groups’, ‘official product pages’, ‘unofficial product pages/groups’, and ‘pages/groups with specific issues’. The average percentages of complaining incidents to the total amount of posts on each section are given in Table 8.2.

Table 8. 2- Average Complaining Incidents for Each Section

Section	Percentage of Negative Posts
Official Brand Pages (9 pages)	25.52%
Unofficial Brand Pages (6 pages/groups)	27.43%
Anti-brand Pages (7 pages/groups)	96.21%
Official Product Pages (10 pages)	23.35%
Unofficial Product Pages (10 pages/groups)	21.86%
Pages with Specific Issues (9 pages/groups)	83.60%
Total (51 pages/groups)	46.33%

Since anti-brand pages focus only on the negative sides of the companies it was expected to identify 100% negative posts on these. However, there were consumers, or fans, of the

company who sometimes commented with positive content and defended the company on two pages ('I hate Apple' and 'i hate ryanair'). Pages that were created to complain about specific issues also had a high level of complaining posts, because most of the posts on these pages were about that specific problem. These pages also received posts with positive content which was mostly to make fun of the situation. On the all other types of Facebook sections, similar percentages of negative posts (i.e. average 24.54%) were identified.

Consumers' use of pages/groups varies. Some are active participants of the pages, engaging in discussions and interacting with other participants regularly. Whereas others prefer to post on a page only when they have something particular to share (e.g. complaints or compliments) and others do not participate in the pages at all even though they become members by 'liking' the page. All the pages/groups in the sample had some active consumers who regularly posted and interacted with others. Additionally, some other members were active for only short periods of time. These members contributed to the page/group and communicated with others for a limited period of time, but did not continue to use the page/group. Finally, there were consumers who visited the page only when they wanted to complain or look for information. These consumers posted once, and continued to communicate through that post until they reached an outcome, and did not participate in the page again.

It was identified that the amount of complaining posts on public sections was subject to changes based on seasonal factors. During the Christmas and Easter holidays, the amount of posts from consumers decreased on all public sections. Moreover, offline media coverage (e.g. TV news shows, newspaper) about a Facebook page increased the member size and the amount of posts on the page. For example, the page 'Can this orangutan get more fans than Nestle?' was mentioned in newspapers in the first month of data collection. A couple of days

following the newspaper article, member size of this page increased considerably.⁶ Also, the pages/groups with a high number of members were subject to spam posts (i.e. posts that aim to advertise a product or service, usually relevant but not always about the topic of the page). However, since spam messages are not directly relevant to the complaining, they were excluded from the data analysis of this study.

Eleven pages in the sample which had initially hosted participation and interaction became inactive by the end of the data collection period (see Table 8.3). These were the only pages in the sample that did not receive posts from consumers every day.

Table 8. 3- Pages Became Inactive during the Study

Name of the page	Type of the page
Boycott Nike	Anti-brand page
Boycott Procter & Gamble AND Pampers for chemical burns on little babies!	Issue specific page
Can this orangutan get more fans than Nestle?	Issue specific page
Dear Google can you let me write my sentence before u start guessing it	Issue specific page
Dear iPhone/iPod: I know I have 20% left! Thanks for messing mt game up!!	Issue specific page
Google Earth	Unofficial product page
I hate it when I get coke in my cup of ice at mcdonaldss	Issue specific page
People Against Kraft	Anti-brand page
Tesco Value Vodka	Unofficial product page
WE HATE KRAFT FOR TAKING OVER CADBURYs	Issue specific page
Why does the Tesco in Selly Oak always smell bad???	Issue specific page

The majority of these are the pages with specific issues. Since these pages are related to particular incidents, consumers might have stopped complaining on these pages because of the changes in the situation of that particular issue: especially if the companies have solved the problems or improved conditions. Two of the other pages in this category, ‘Tesco Value

⁶ Other examples of this situation were from outside of the sample elements such as the pages called ‘SHAME ON YOU TESCO - EVERY PENNY HURTS.. LET THE TRUTH SURFACE’ and ‘Kalamazoo Residents against T&J Towing’.

Vodka’ and ‘Google Earth’ are unofficial pages for products. These two pages were only active when they were first created, but consumers appear to have lost interest in these pages. For example, the page ‘Tesco Value Vodka’ first hosted debates between fans of the product and others who believed the product was unhealthy. However, the popularity of the topic faded in time. The other two pages in this category are anti-brand pages. The page called ‘People Against Kraft’ was created during Kraft’s takeover of Cadbury, and focused on this issue. Therefore, it showed similar characteristics with the pages that created for particular issues.

Not all complaining activities on Facebook had detailed explanations. Some consumers did not talk about the problem, situation or their reasons for complaining, but only stated their feelings and/or opinions about the companies. For example, it was not unusual to see posts that only say ‘I hate you Nike’ or ‘everybody should boycott McDonald’s’ without any explanation. A large proportion of these posts also contained only swearing (e.g. ‘f*** iPhone’ or ‘Google Earth s**ks’). Additionally, there were some consumers who posted the exact same post several times. These consumers might have believed that they could reach more people or attract the company’s attention if they posted the same message at different times, or believed that the original message was deleted and wanted to post it again.

In some cases, consumers’ other consumption-related activities such as asking questions, sharing experiences and seeking advice/suggestions also resulted as complaining. Although some of these consumers might have not particularly intended to complain, they contributed to negative online content about the company/product. It is not possible to know the real intentions of these consumers without interviewing them about their behaviour. However, it is possible these consumers might not have considered themselves as complaining, but having

conversations, asking questions, consulting the companies or engaging with other social activities.

In other cases, consumers not only complained but also talked about their intended or past exit behaviours:

“Sky is a waste of time. My dad has been having problems with them for ages and all they say is you will need to pay £65 to get a man out to fix it. I wouldn't recommend it to anyone else and when my contract is up I am going to another provider.” (Sky)

Although this post shows clear intention to exit, it is not possible to know if the consumer actually exited from the company. He might only be ‘publicly complaining’ in order to vent, threaten the company, or mention exit as an option.

When consumers mentioned their plans of exit on their posts in redress seeking situations, the complaints sometimes had threatening characteristics. One example of this is a consumer who threatened Amazon to exit unless they fix his problem:

“i order fifa on november 21, you promised to deliver it on the release date, all my friends received their copies today, mine is yet to be dispatched, im disgraced, you better do something to fix this or never again will i be shopping from amazon” (Amazon.com)

Also some consumers talked about exit in relation to boycott activities, especially when they believed that the company engaged with behaviours that concern the public. In these cases, some consumers preferred to explain the situation to others and to show the importance of boycotting, and some others aimed to convince others to boycott:

“We need to boycott until they stop using child labor in African countries.” (Nestlé - unofficial)

The next sub-sections explore the characteristics of the six sections of Facebook (official brand pages, unofficial brand pages, anti-brand pages, official product pages, unofficial

product pages, and pages with specific issues) in terms of the content of complaining posts on these pages.

8.2.1.1. Complaining Content on Official and Unofficial pages

As explained previously, only official representatives of companies, organisations and businesses can create official pages. As Facebook users can create an unlimited number of pages and groups, companies can also create an unlimited number of official pages for their brands, products, departments, campaigns and even for different regions and countries. All companies in the sample have at least one official page, with the exception of Ryanair which does not participate in social media. Three companies- Nike, Apple and McDonalds'-, however, did not allow consumers' posts on their official pages, so these were not included in the sample.

Official and unofficial pages of companies mostly had similar characteristics in terms of their content. On both of these pages, consumers interacted with each other, communicated with the company and engaged in similar types of complaining activities. However, there were some minor differences. Firstly, there was less interaction among consumers in the unofficial pages. Also, unofficial pages contained more spam posts compared with official ones. This could be due to admin monitoring of official pages; since admins are employed by companies, deleting spam posts might be part of their job description. However, creators and admins of the unofficial pages might prefer not to delete spam.

Some Facebook users create unofficial pages for the companies/products without any official connection with the company. Nine of the unofficial pages in the sample looked like official pages. Consumers can mistake these pages for official ones. For example, on June 2011, the

official Tesco page⁷ had around 48,600 members while an unofficial page again named Tesco but with capital letters⁸ had around 86,300 members. On June 2012, after the unofficial page was deleted, the official one had more than one million members. Two examples below are from unofficial pages that would indicate that some consumers were not aware that the pages were unofficial and wanted to communicate with the company:

“Dear Apple. Even though, your products are well built, nobody wants to use them. More freedom please!!” (iPhone)

“Get some bloody idea of what your customers are going through. I just seen a young French couple and an elderly German couple almost get into a fight at the airport because your service and process for flying is excessively complicated. Get a clue and think long term, sit around a table with your directors and start eliminating unnecessary processes. For Petes sake I was only flying from Spain to another part of Spain!” (Ryanair)

8.2.1.2. Complaining Content on Brand Pages and Product Pages

Facebook does not limit the topic of pages/groups: both consumers and the companies can create separate pages for products/services. From observation, there are not major differences between official brand and product pages in terms of their use by consumers. The only major difference is that some product pages in the sample were not very interactive compared to brand pages (see Section 8.4 and Table 8.5).

Both brand and product pages received complaints about products and other corporate level activities. As an example, pages of P&G and Pampers both received complaints about Pampers products and company’s discount coupon policies. That is surprising because it was originally assumed that consumers who wanted to complain about a product might prefer particular product’s page aiming to reach specialised customer services. It is possible that

⁷ Tesco – official: <http://www.facebook.com/tesco>

⁸ TESCO – unofficial (deleted): <http://www.facebook.com/pages/TESCO/23447715913>

some consumers might not know about the existence of these pages or prefer brand pages in order to reach a bigger group of people. Additionally, four product pages hosted discussions which were not about the company or products. These are ‘Pampers’ in which mothers talked about their babies, ‘Sky Sports’ in which fans discussed sport and matches, ‘Nike Football’ in which fans discussed football, and ‘Amazon Kindle’ in which fans talked about books and authors.

Another noticeable finding about brand and product pages was about Nestlé and Kraft. Both of these companies faced with complaints on their brand and product pages. However, Nestlé brand page had more complaints about products compared with Kraft brand page. The majority of the complaints on Kraft’s page were about corporate level activities (e.g. acquisition of Cadbury or use of a particular ingredient). It is possible that this could be an outcome of using the corporate name on the packaging of products. Since Nestlé usually use Nestlé brand on the labels of products, consumers might be aware that products such as KitKat or Nescafe belong to Nestlé. On the contrary, Kraft products do not always carry Kraft logo on the front side of the packaging and consumers might not know Oreo, for example, is a Kraft product. Hence, when consumers want to complain on Facebook, they might go for the product pages instead of brand pages.

Since no other important difference in terms of CCB was found on brand and product pages, the analysis of this study does not treat these two types of pages separately. The term ‘official’ pages is used to describe ‘official brand and product pages’, whereas the term ‘unofficial’ is used for ‘unofficial brand and product pages’.

8.2.1.3. Complaining Content on Anti-brand Pages

Consumers who do not like, or hate, companies can create pages/groups to demonstrate these feelings. These pages were originally named as ‘anti-brand pages’ in this study. Later, observations revealed that these pages carry two different types of characteristics: ‘boycott pages’ and ‘hatred pages’.

The three pages, namely ‘Boycott Nestlé’, ‘Boycott Nike’ and ‘Can we find 1 million people who will never use Vodafone (again)?’ were called boycott pages. These were more organised and coordinated compared to rest of anti-brand pages: creators and admins filled in information sections on the pages, deleted spam posts, and in most cases answered others’ posts. In general, participants of these pages interact with each other more regularly and try to help each other.

“Hello Cynthia, you can find the full list of Nestlé products on this link: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Nestl%C3%A9_brands” (Boycott Nestlé)

Also all three boycott pages in the sample had a core group of people who contributed to the page regularly. These consumers participated in the page more often than others did, knew other members, and interacted with most of the posts on the page either with comments or pressing the ‘like’ button.

Additionally, some members of the boycott pages did not actually use these pages for only complaining purposes, but rather as a communication tool with each other. These consumers shared news and organised events and/or campaigns on the boycott pages. For example, one month before the Easter holiday in 2011, some members of Boycott Nestlé participated in a campaign called ‘Nestlé, we’ve got a question’. They had changed their profile photos with a text that says ‘What comes first, the Children or the egg?’, and posted the same message on Nestlé’s official page, which was

"Hey Nestlé, check out my profile pic! I'm having a crack at you because I want you to set an eggsample and hop on board with 100% traffik free chocolate!" (Nestlé)

Since these also carried negative information about the companies, some of these essentially served as online CCB.

The second type of anti-brand pages was called hatred pages. Unlike boycott pages, consumers on these pages were not interacting with each other a lot, and also no collective activity was identified. Some members used the page purely for complaining, and the rest made fun of the company, or vented negative feelings without giving reasons:

"I f..king hate apple phones..." (I hate Apple)

Additionally, members of these pages usually shared altered photos or funny pictures to mock the company (see Appendix 8.3). Overall, these pages had a lot of photos, pictures, and jokes that made the page look more entertaining compared with boycott pages.

8.2.1.4. Complaining Content of Complaining on Pages with Specific Issues

Consumers could also create pages/groups related to a specific situation or a particular complaint on Facebook. Some consumers might prefer to complain on these pages rather than generic ones, or simply prefer to communicate here with others who have similar problems. Since the titles of these pages are mostly self-explanatory, when consumers 'like' these pages, their friends would see the name of page on their news feed, and would learn about the problems. This helps the negative information spread quickly, and some consumers might even believe that liking these pages itself is an act of complaining.

Pages with specific issues in the sample can be divided into two. The first type can be described as 'complaining for fun'. These are 'Dear iPhone/iPod: I know I have 20% left! Thanks for messing my game up!!', 'Dear Google can you let me write my sentence before u

start guessing it’ and ‘I hate it when I get coke in my cup of ice at mcdonaldss’. The creators of these pages might or might not have genuinely wanted to complain about these issues. However, since the title of these pages/groups has a playful tone, the majority of the posts did not have serious messages:

“LOL! ohhh I hate it when google does that!! It is like that friend that always try to Finish Your Sentences Before You Do.. So Google is annoying Friend! LOL!” (Dear Google can you let me write my sentence before u start guessing it)

Nevertheless, being a member of these pages does not inevitably imply complaining: some members could have joined for entertainment purposes. However, there were still a minority of consumers with more serious tones who might have genuine complaints:

“This happened to me when I was about to break my record on Fruit Ninja so it messed up all the game and I had to quit the application!! Thanks!! (Dear iPhone/iPod: I know I have 20% left! Thanks for messing my game up!!)

The second type was the pages with serious names in the title (e.g. ‘WE HATE KRAFT FOR TAKING OVER CADBURYs’ and ‘Boycott Nike for Signing Michael Vick’). These had similar characteristics with the anti-brand pages. However, they had a higher level of interaction in the form of answering questions and helping each other compared with others. One of the reasons for this could be because there was only one particular problem that bothered all the members, so they were more willing to talk about this problem. Creators/admins of these pages were also active participants. For example, admin of the page called ‘Can this orangutan get more fans than Nestle?’ often shared long and detailed explanations about Nestlé’s use of palm oil and admins of ‘Why does Tesco in Selly oak always smell bad???’ regularly made announcements about the store in order to help others to keep track of the situation in the store.

At the end of data analysis period, only two of these pages were still active: ‘Boycott Nike for Signing Michael Vick’ and ‘I have no reception is code for “Im with vodafone”’. Consumers stopped posting on the rest of the pages in this category except some occasional spam. Since these pages were only about a specific complaint if the company solves the problem or improves the situation, the pages are expected to receive less or no contribution. This might be the case with some of these pages. Indeed, it is known to the researcher that the smell problem in Tesco in Selly Oak was solved; hence there was no active participation regarding this issue on the page (i.e. ‘Why does the Tesco in Selly Oak always smell bad???’) any more.

8.2.2. Complaining on Profile Pages

Consumers use their profile pages to share opinions, experiences, whereabouts, jokes and memories as well as to ask questions. These are seen as easiest and fastest way to communicate with friends and family. On average, 38 status updates were shared daily during the data collection period by 545 participants. 88 of these included CCB.

Technically, it is possible to use the same Facebook features (e.g. adding photos/videos) on pages/groups and profiles. Observations revealed that CCB on public and profile pages had similar and different characteristics. Complaining on profiles mainly carried similar objectives with complaining on pages/groups (see Section 8.5). However, the characteristics of the interaction following complaining posts on public and profile pages were different (see Section 8.4). Photos showing the problems used frequently with complaints on profiles but no video with a complaint were identified. Unlike posts on public sections, CCB on profiles followed grammar and punctuation rules. One of the reasons of this difference is it is likely that consumers try to be more careful when they write posts that are visible to their friends and associated with their identity through Facebook profiles, but do not mind seeming careless when they talk with strangers. Also, it is possible that there was a sampling bias:

consumers, who did not follow language rules on pages/groups, might not have followed them on their profiles as well, but due to their privacy settings it was not possible to check this.

Majority of CCB on profiles were directed to friends and family:

“Dear friends, am I the only one who finds new Facebook profiles annoying?????”

Also, no posts with redress objective were identified, suggesting that consumers might know that these were not visible to companies. However, in some cases, it was not clear that consumers knew that companies cannot read their posts, especially when they directed the message to the company:

“I like you HTC Sensation, but if only you could keep your battery charged more than 12 hours”

or used a formal opening with the company name:

“Dear Adobe, sorry I was away so many years but ... you still did not learn how to show multiple documents in multiple windows? Seriously?”

These consumers might have changed their privacy settings so as the companies can see their posts if they search Facebook for the company name. Alternatively, they might not know about Facebook’s privacy settings, and assumed that their posts were visible to the public by default. Lastly, it is also possible that they actually knew that only their friends would see these posts, but wanted to use such a discourse to make their posts interesting or creative.

Although consumers mentioned their intentions to exit on the profiles, these did not have threatening attitudes, mostly intended to inform friends about situation:

“That’s it, I’m done with Samsung...”

It was also common to post updates about the initial complaint if the conditions changed for good:

“seriously SKY??? seriously...”

“Sky update: I may well have finished my PhD before I get internet at my flat. This may be the next challenge I set for myself.”

“Bye bye dongle, hello SKY.. I made it! I have a proper internet! Woop woop”

or for worse:

“SPSS is a joke”

“Spss, you a joke!! Catastrophe of interface design! Flashback of medieval ages!!!”

“Now I realised SPSS is worse! It is pushing my limits!!!!!!!!!!”

Unlike public sections, consumers mostly created their own content on profiles. In the dataset, there are only two incidents that copy another post. Both of them were about boycott activities, and aimed to spread information. Below is one of them:

“via Amy Beth Whitehead: For those who wish to join in the boycott, these are the companies participating in the Workfare program, in which benefit claimants are sent to work for an eight-week period, receiving only their usual benefits rather than a real salary. This means that we, the taxpayers, are paying for the likes of Tesco to have free staff. Not only can this result in people working for below the minimum wage, but it also removes the incentive for these massively profit-making companies to create real permanent paying jobs, thus further weakening the UK's fragile economy.” (also added a list of the companies)

Other than these two posts, no boycott activities were identified. It is possible that consumers who use Facebook for boycott might want to reach more people, hence preferred public sections that can be viewed by more people.

8.3. Types of Problem that Create Complaining on Facebook

This section explores the variety of problem types that consumers use Facebook to complain about. Since the research design limits online observations with the companies in the sample and their products, this discussion focuses only on problem types, and not product types.

While some consumers complained about a particular problem that they recently encountered, some others complained about an on-going issues. It should also be noted that sometimes consumers had more than one reason to complain:

“can’t believe what’s happening with you vodafone, it’s a shame really, we have signal problems since we made our last contract, further the stupid people in the customer services can never help with anything, how long you need to put yourself together” (vodafone 3G)

This post mainly concerns problems regarding the signal problems of Vodafone. However, there are also references to issues with customer services of the company.

Table 8.4 shows the frequencies of the problem types in the dataset. Below, explanations and examples of each problem type are presented.

Table 8. 4- Frequencies of the Problem Types

REASON FOR COMPLAINING	# of posts
Product-service issues	248
Strategic issues	120
Customer services	98
Corporate responsibility	80
No reason stated	73
Marketing- advertising	36
Online shopping	28
Employee problems	26
Store environment	20
Management of Facebook page	19

Problems with *products and services* were the most common reasons for complaining on Facebook. All the companies in the sample received complaints due to these problems. These

complaints sometimes aimed to seek redress, and other times to warn others, ask for help or simply vent:

“My kindle touch screen has gone black for no apparent reason, I have just fully charged it and tried to reset, but the screen remains completely dark. I’m devastated, please help!”
(Amazon Kindle)

In particular, problems with products created more complaints (71.52%) than problems with services (38.30%). However, companies who offer both products and services such as Gap and McDonald’s received more complaints due to their services than their products:

“Been in at GAP mall store in Brigade to make a return today. Stood around for 15 mins while the one clerk helping another customer, and four other employees wandering around the store! Really irritated me and I did no shopping there!” (Gap)

Strategic issues were the second most common type. These were the cases when consumers were not happy with the company’s decisions regarding the marketing mix elements and growth strategies such as the selection of markets, pricing, use of resources, packaging, and other long term goals:

“Nestle, oh Nestle....It seems your products have gone on a diet. Your wonderful packages of semi-sweet chocolate goodness (chips) now weigh 11.5 oz instead of 12. I will no longer be buying your products until you add that extra .5 oz back.” (Nestlé)

The third most common problem type was the problems with *customer services*. These were consumers who had already dissatisfied due to another problem, and after contacting the customer services to no avail, they complain on Facebook as well:

“Have been getting the worst customer service run around in the history of run arounds. Epic fail on this one, Amazon”(Amazon.com)

Corporate responsibility was another common problem type. Particularly, consumers complained about moral principles, and international norms concerning the operation and

regulation of companies' business conduct. Posts in this category covered areas including environmental concerns, fair-trade policies, genetically modified food products, pollution, animal rights, habitat destruction, and workplace safety. These consumers usually gave details or share links of websites that had more information about the topic, but some of them shared only their feelings. Talking about exit and boycott was another common characteristic of these posts:

"Shame on you Amazon for selling fur! I was once a regular customer but started getting rather perturbed by some of the items you sold. Now that I have seen your ad for white fox fur, I can guarantee I will never buy from you again." (Amazon.com)

As discussed in the Section 8.2.1, some consumers did not explain the reasons of their complaints. These are grouped under the '*no reason stated*' category. In these cases, it was not possible to know, or understand the situation that made the consumer complain without any further investigation:

"If anyone needs a 'Dislike' button, this company certainly does!" (Ryanair)

CCB on Facebook did not occur only after a transaction between the consumer and the company: some consumers complained about *marketing or advertising activities*. For example, consumers who found television adverts offensive or misleading complained about these. Moreover, it was observed that whenever companies in the sample had an online or offline promotional campaign, their pages received more complaints than average, mostly about this campaign:

"Do you think that's fair, you changed the terms of your much advertised promotion without any notice, shame Vodafone, shame!" (vodafone 3G)

Another type of problem was the technical difficulties and drawbacks with *online shopping*. It is possible that Facebook was one of the first places to complain for the consumers who

encountered with online problems while shopping. They might have logged on Facebook to seek information and/or a solution to their problems immediately after facing problems. This might be a convenient way to complain, given that they were already online, and can switch to Facebook easily from the company website:

"I'm trying to purchase a vest and it keeps putting the original price when I press checkout!!! Today is the last day for 20% off! I was on hold for 45 min with customer service and decided to hang up a few minutes ago" (Gap)

Problems with *employees* were also created complaining on Facebook. Some consumers might prefer to complain online rather than complaining directly to the employee in the store, or had initially tried to solve the problem face-to-face, but could not manage to do so. The page 'Ryanair' was one of the most noticeable examples of this sort of complaining; problems with employees had the highest level of occurrence compared with other problems on this page.⁹ When consumers complained about employees, they almost always gave information about the store location and the employee. This suggests that these consumers might have wanted to carry the issue to upper levels of management:

"I was in Hackney road branch, London today, purchased some alcohol with my girlfriend, we served by a girl Jess who made us feel very uncomfortable. I'm 48 and my partner is 25, and checkout girl was so rude that she made me feel like a pervert and also I was embarrassed for my girlfriend. I think your staff need to learn not to speak to people how they wouldn't be spoken to" (Tesco)

Problems with the *store environment* were one of the least common reasons for complaining on Facebook. Similar to the problems with employees, consumers complained about the store environments on Facebook always gave information on the store location:

⁹ Permission to use direct quotations about Ryanair as examples could have not been obtained from the post owners.

“What is going on in in your Aigburth Road store in Liverpool, it’s freezing!!! All the staff members are frozen, they are wearing scarfs and gloves and carry hotwater bottles. You should care about your customers and staff and fix the heating!! This is 2012, how difficult could it be?” (Tesco)

Having rather a low level of frequency compared with the other types of problems, complaining about *management of Facebook page* was another problem type. Consumers complained on official pages of the companies when they were not happy with the way a company managed its page. Some examples of these unfavourable company practices are ignoring or deleting posts, and using boilerplate answers (i.e. generic answers that are consisted of a standard text copied and pasted to everybody). If consumers realised that their posts were deleted by the company without any explanation, they continued to complain with more aggressive tones, and mostly combined this issue with their initial complaint:

“Wow, P&G!, You seriously deleted my post from you wall? You are unbelievable, I never saw a worse practice” (P&G)

It should be noted that since the companies in the sample do not operate in the same industry or markets, not all of them had posts with all types of problems. For example, Google and Amazon do not have stores, so there were not any posts on their pages regarding store environment, and since Ryanair and McDonalds’ do not have official pages, they did not receive complaints about the management of the page. These might be one of the reasons for the lower frequencies of the last four types of problems (i.e. online shopping, employee problems, store environment, and management on Facebook), because these categories are not applicable to at least one of the companies in the sample.

8.4. Interaction through Complaining on Facebook

This section presents the nature of interaction through complaining on Facebook. Facebook users can communicate with each other through commenting on posts. Interactions following complaints among consumers were observed both on pages/groups and profiles. Moreover, since admins can also comment posts on the pages to contact consumers, interactions between consumers and the companies were observed on pages.

The following two subsections discuss the interaction on the public and profile pages separately.

8.4.1. Interaction on Public Pages/Groups

Pages/groups in the sample had different levels of participation and interaction ranging from low to high levels of interactions. Although only active and data-rich pages were included in the sample (see Section 7.2.1.1.1), nine pages in the sample did not have as much consumer participation as the rest of the pages (see Table 8.5).

Table 8. 5- Pages with Less Consumer Participation

Name of the page	Type of page
AMAZON	Unofficial brand page
Aero	Unofficial product page
Baby Gap	Unofficial product page
Cadbury	Unofficial product page
Kindle...	Unofficial product page
Kit Kat	Official product page
Mcdonalds Fries	Unofficial product page
Nike Football	Official product page
OLAY	Unofficial product page

Eight of these pages were the product pages with one exception, the unofficial brand page of Amazon. However, two of the most active pages were also product pages- ‘iTunes’ and ‘Pampers’. It seems that consumers prefer to interact on generic pages for some companies

while using product pages for other companies. For example, consumers could be using the brand page of Nestlé instead of using product pages of ‘KitKat’ and ‘Aero’ when they want to communicate about these products. However, in some other cases, this is not possible, because some companies do not have official brand pages (e.g. Apple/iTunes), or consumers might not know the parent company of the some products (e.g. P&G/Pampers).

The rest of the pages can be divided into two based on the type of interactions that they have: interaction solely among consumers and interactions that involve company. On the user-created pages/groups no interaction between consumers and the company were identified during observations. Moreover, some companies used their pages only to broadcast information rather than interact with consumers. However, other official pages hosted both interactions among consumers and interactions between consumers and the company. Some of the interactions between consumers carried characteristics of brand communities and some company interactions worked like customer services. Table 8.6 lists the pages/groups according to the types of interactions that they had, and Subsections 8.4.1.1 and 8.4.1.2 discuss these in detail.

Table 8. 6- Types of Interaction on the Pages/Groups

Interaction only among consumers		Interaction involves companies	
Brand community interactions	Conversations	Conversations	Interactions similar to customer services
Amazon Kindle	Amazon.com	Cadbury Dairy Milk	Banana Republic
apple :)	Google	Gap	Clothing at Tesco
Boycot Nike for signing Michael Vick	Google Chrome	Nestlé (<i>official</i>)	Kraft - Corporation
Boycott Nestle	I hate McDonalds!	Pampers	Procter & Gamble
Can we find 1 million people who will never use Vodafone (again)?	i have no reception is code for "Im with vodafone"	Sky Sports	Sky
I hate Apple	iPhone	Tesco	
i hate ryanair	iTunes	Vodafone UK	
	Mc donalds		
	Nestle (<i>unofficial</i>)		
	Nike		
	Ryanair		
	vodafone 3G		

8.4.1.1. Interaction among Consumers

As strangers can use Facebook to communicate, consumers can comment on others' posts even if they are not connected through Facebook. These conversations were usually limited to the subject of the page/group and the original post. There were two main types of interactions: brand community interactions and conversations. A brand community is defined as "a specialised, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social reactions among admirers of a brand." (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001:412). Members of the brand communities share 'a common consciousness', 'rituals and traditions' and 'a sense of moral responsibility' (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). On Facebook, pages with brand community interactions showed similar traits. Most consumers shared concerns and carried common views.

“we cannot let this evil person to walk freely among us and earn praise after his horrendous acts, that’s our responsibility for the animals and our children”

(comment 1) *“I’ll sign this”*

(comment 2) *“and for the whole world”*

(comment 3) *“count me in”* (Boycott Nike for signing Michael Vick)

These pages usually hosted active consumer involvement and consumers communicated here with each other regularly, signalling that these consumers formed interpersonal relationships:

“When it comes to Nestle, I agree with everything you say Cliff..” (Boycott Nestle)

Moreover, they usually answered each other even in the cases that they could not help to solve the problem, mostly in a way to offer sympathy:

“oh no, that’s too bad. I hope you can get it sorted out soon” (Amazon Kindle)

The rest of the pages also hosted conversations among consumers, but these did not carry characteristics of brand communities. In these pages, interaction between consumers was limited with the particular complaint and product-related content. Some of these conversations aimed to help by suggesting ways to solve the problem, or to provide support:

“When it happens, try going into settings, turning airplane mode off and on again.” (apple :))

One of the most common types of conversations was from the other consumers who had similar problems with the same products/services. These consumers added their own experiences and/or feelings to the original post, showed support, and eventually this increased the solidarity among consumers:

“I totally agree, this is unfair, they should have clearly stated in the baggage policy as it is with every other airline, we have experienced something similar at Valencia airport and had to pay €150” (Ryanair)

There were also consumers whose comments were about other issues with the same company. In this way, consumers contributed to the discussion with further issues so as to develop the discussion about the company:

“It is not only about use of child labor, their baby milk formula poses health risks, even in the developed world, 5times more babies are admitted to A and E with GI upsets if they are on formula compared to breastmilk” (Boycott Nestle)

Sometimes consumers talked about similar problems with other companies or products. Although the pages/groups are devoted for a particular company/product, there are no limitations in terms of the topic of posts. Consumers might have aimed to inform others about alternatives, and to develop the page/group as an information source:

“I don’t think it is just Tesco though everyone is doing the same, I saw it on Sainsbury’s and Asda too! The pack looks almost the same, the price is the same but look closely and you’ll see that the new pack is much smaller” (Tesco)

Loyal consumers or fans of the company occasionally defended the company against complainers on these pages/groups. Their posts were usually explanatory and educational which aimed to change negative opinions about the company. However, sometimes they were only provocative:

“Shut up apple is amazing the only reason you don’t like it is probably because you can’t afford it” (iPhone)

Finally, there were three other themes observed commonly amongst the interactions of consumers: ‘joking’, ‘curiosity’ and ‘enduring’. Some consumers replied to the complaining posts with jokes or by making fun the company; some others replied with questions to learn more about the problem or the experience, and others advised to endure the problems with the company. Believing that the company would not help to solve the issue or improve it in any

way in the future, these consumers advised others to content themselves with current situation.

This kind of interaction could be regarded as a part of ‘no-action’ behaviour:

“don’t bother, this is what vodafone always does. Has always been this way.” (i have no reception is code for “Im with Vodafone”)

8.4.1.2. Interaction Involving the Company

When the company uses its page to communicate with consumers, the interaction on this page involves company participation in addition to consumers’ conversations. Eight of the 13 companies in the sample- Gap, Kraft, Nestle, Nike, P&G, Sky, Tesco and Vodafone- interacted with consumers on their official pages. On these pages, admins regularly monitored the page and communicated with the consumers. They answered questions, thanked consumers for their compliments and tried to help or solve the problem when consumers complained:

“Hi there, I just checked and you should have been charged £1 for them so I am really sorry that you were not. If you can send me a private message with your home and email address I will be able to refund the difference back to you?” (Tesco)

“I’m so sorry to hear what’s happened. If you could let me know which type of order it was that you placed and your order number I will certainly look into this for you. Thanks” (Gap)

However, it is not always possible for them to solve consumers’ problems. In these cases, some companies do not respond or comment on these posts, some others delete the post and others answer with boilerplate material that is shared with other consumers who complain on the same issue:

“Thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to respond. As a global food manufacturer, we take into consideration local consumer preferences and attitudes about the use of ingredients derived from genetically modified (GM) crops. All the raw materials that we use comply with strict regulatory and safety evaluations. So let us reassure you that our

products are of high quality and are safe to consume. For more information please read: <http://bit.ly/TWFctG>” (Nestlè)

On some of the official pages, consumers did not interact with each other: although they posted their complaints on the page, they did not communicate with others. However, admins of these pages replied to all posts. In a sense, these pages worked like customer service departments of the companies. The main motivation to complain on these pages was to seek redress. Admins helped consumers to solve problems, or directed them to the other communication channels of the company:

“Melanie, thanks for getting in touch, if you're having signal issues please try our online diagnostics tool <http://goo.gl/JnENX> , I would also have a read here <http://goo.gl/BYC4X> . Let me know how you get on. Thanks Conan” (Sky)

“Hello Monika, We want to help you and understand more about your experience. Please call us at 1-877-256-3265.” (Pampers)

8.4.2. Interaction on Profile Pages

Consumers can also communicate on their profile pages with their friends. Almost all complaining messages on the profiles in the dataset received comments. These comments can be summarised into three areas: (1) sharing similar experiences, (2) showing sympathy, and (3) entertainment.

When other consumers had similar experiences with the same company, they mentioned these. These comments were mostly about their own experience. Some of them aimed to help by suggesting ways to solve the problem, and others only stated that they share the same feelings:

“The trick is knowing that each sky rep is given a set number of deals to give to customers each week. They never give out on a Monday and by Friday they have none left but they get

bonuses for keeping customers who threaten to leave. At least you can save some money from their incompetent service!”

“same here, I hate these guys, they cancelled my card too”

Second, when they did not know how to help, some consumers showed sympathy:

“Oh dear, that’s unlucky, I hope they will sort it out and you can continue your travel soon!”

Lastly, other consumers made fun of the company without adding any new information:

“SKY can become even cheaper by NOT providing you with internet!! Lol! Cheapest deal I’ve ever heard of ;))”

The reason for consumers to use this approach on profile pages could be the opportunity to have fun with friends which possibly turn negative situations into something more positive.

The topics of the conversations on profiles were converted to other subjects or daily talk very easily. When consumers gave detailed information especially about their personal experiences, rather than solely expressing feelings, comments from friends led to a change in the topic:

“-Does this mean you are coming back home early?”

-Oh no, it’s just 3 day trip to Moscow (looks like now, only 2 days) I’ll call you when I’m back.

-Do that, we need to go for dress shopping before the wedding!!!!!!

-you know, I saw something the other day online, you are gonna love that, I’ll try and send the link to you tomorrow”

This sort of change never happened in the public pages/groups since consumers who use these places to communicate about products are otherwise unrelated.

8.5. Perceived Objectives of CCB on Facebook

The aim of this section is to explore the objectives of CCB on Facebook. By examining consumers' objectives, it was hoped to understand the characteristics of different ways of complaining online. Following the previous sections, this section was also divided into two subsections in order to focus on perceived objectives of posts on public pages and profiles separately.

8.5.1. Perceived Objectives of CCB on Public Pages/Groups

Since, consumers can use public pages to communicate with a company and/or other consumers, these pages were used for a variety of objectives. Observations identified eight objectives that consumers expressed on their posts on public pages/groups. Table 8.7 and Table 8.8 show the frequencies of these objectives within the official and user-created pages.

Table 8. 7- Frequencies of the Perceived Objectives of CCB on Official Pages

Perceived Objectives	Official brand pages	Official product pages	TOTAL
Advising the company	28	30	58
Comparisons	13	15	28
Criticism	62	16	78
Entertainment	6	0	6
Redress seeking	49	30	79
Seeking advice/suggestions	12	22	34
Venting	88	45	133
Warning others	32	5	37

Table 8. 8- Frequencies of the Perceived Objectives of CCB on User-Created Pages

Perceived Objectives	Anti-brand pages	Issue specific pages	Unofficial brand pages	Unofficial product pages	TOTAL
Advising the company	0	0	9	3	12
Comparisons	4	1	9	0	14
Criticism	13	4	16	5	38
Entertainment	6	12	9	4	31
Redress seeking	0	2	11	3	16
Seeking advice/suggestions	1	0	8	5	14
Venting	18	21	41	7	87
Warning others	12	1	11	2	26

According to Table 8.7 and 8.8, consumers used both official and user-created pages mainly to *vent*. This objective has the highest frequency in all types of pages/groups. It suggests that

consumers' use of Facebook might have been mainly aimed at venting negative feelings (e.g. anger, frustration, annoyance) and to feel better about the situation. Since this does not require a particular audience, using both official and user-created pages can help consumers to achieve it. This objective is followed by *redress seeking* on the official pages and *criticism* on the user-created pages. Posts with *redress seeking* specifically target the company. However, some consumers mistook the unofficial pages for the official ones, and used these pages to seek redress (see Section 8.2.1.1). *Criticism*, on the other hand, might target different audiences depending on the objectives for complaining. Consumers who wanted to criticise the company in order to evaluate or give their opinions about it, prefer to use official pages as they want to be heard directly by the company. On the other hand, consumers who want to communicate with others so as to spread information can use both official and user-created pages. It should also be noted that in the view of the researcher, consumers who criticise might have additional objectives, such as expecting a redress without openly asking for it, or venting feelings without showing emotion.

The rest of the perceived objectives (i.e. 'advising the company', 'comparisons with other companies', 'entertainment', 'seeking advice/suggestions' and 'warning others') have similar frequencies in official and user-created pages with some minor exceptions. When consumers *advise the company*, they provide feedback. These are usually loyal consumers who want the company to improve:

"i love your clothing, i love your store and the new eco-friendly design. but using your web site to pay my bill is another story. the problems: getting a confirmation number doesn't mean your payment has gone through so you probably really need to pay a couple days in advance so you know for sure and don't get a late charge. you must also change the "billing date" to have the process even start, heads up on that." (Gap)

Comparing the company with other companies is another objective of CCB on Facebook with a relatively lower frequency especially in the user-created pages. Since Facebook allows users to talk and discuss topics of choice without limitations, consumers can openly talk about other companies even in the official pages:

“Shame on you, Gap! The shipping cost to Romania is 91 EURO, about 120 USD, it's unbelievable! Check out the Victoria's Secret, Tommy Hilfiger, Shopbop for shipping cost and do something about it! Or if you can't do anything, remove the international shipping option.”
(Gap)

This consumer promoted competitors, pointing out that other companies were cheaper for the same service. It was also common to list the characteristics of similar products from different companies in order to compare them with each other.

The objective with the lowest frequency in the official pages was *entertainment*, and had a relatively higher frequency in user-created pages. These consumers preferred to voice their complaints with humour, or to made fun of the company.

Another objective was *seeking advice/suggestions*. This includes questions asked directly to the company as well as to others:

“I can't remove the travel insurance while booking a flight and car but I have my own travel insurance. There is no drop down menu to skip the insurance. How come? Or where have you hidden it?” (Ryanair)

Seeking advice/suggestions has relatively low frequency in both official and user-created pages. However, there is a possibility that some other consumers complained with this objective without openly asking questions.

Finally, *warning other consumers* is another objective with similar frequency in official and user-created pages. Consumers who had problems wanted to warn others of similar situations

in order to help or protect them. This sort of information usually was passed through recommending, warning, instructing or educating others¹⁰.

8.5.2. Perceived Objectives of CCB on Profile Pages

Observations revealed that consumers had similar objectives when they complain on public and profile pages. Among the eight objectives that were identified on public pages/groups, six of them- ‘comparisons’, ‘criticism’, ‘entertainment’, ‘seeking advice/suggestions’, ‘venting’ and ‘warning others’- were observed on the profiles. Table 8.9 shows the frequencies of these objectives.

Table 8. 9- Frequencies of the Perceived Objectives of CCB on Profile Pages

Perceived Objectives	Profile Pages
Comparisons	12
Criticism	25
Entertainment	16
Seeking advice/suggestions	9
Venting	44
Warning others	8

Like public pages, *venting* has the highest frequency on profiles and it is followed by *criticism*. Therefore, overall venting as an objective for complaining has the highest frequency on Facebook. Both public pages and profiles offer consumers an opportunity to vent negative emotions through sharing their feelings with others. Some consumers might consider this as a personal matter and prefer to use their profiles, while others might feel even better when they know other people will learn about their problems and therefore share them on the public pages/groups. It was easy to recognise the frustration and stress on some of these posts through the choice of words:

“Spss, you a joke!! Catastrophe of interface design! Flashback of medieval ages!!!”

¹⁰ Permission to use posts with some of the objectives could not been obtained from the post owners and are therefore not included.

Criticism was the second common objective on profile pages. Unlike public pages, when consumers criticise companies on their profiles, they aimed to share opinions and to discuss with their Facebook friends. In this way, consumers had conversations about the companies with their friends.

The objective of *entertainment* had higher frequency on profiles, compared with public pages. It is possible that consumers wanted to be more serious when they complain on the public pages because they were communicating with the companies and/or strangers. Therefore, they might have believed that a serious approach would be more helpful in order to obtain results. However, on profiles, since they communicated with Facebook friends, they might have wanted to create something positive out of their negative experiences.

Posts with *comparisons*, *seeking advice/suggestions* and *warning others* were the other objectives. These posts tended to include more details and less vivid words:

“After their latest cheating, I've decided to leave Turkcell. Which one should go for; Avea or Vodafone?”

Lastly, no post with redress seeking intentions was identified on the profiles. Since profiles do not provide communication opportunities with companies, consumers might not have considered them as a method for redress. However, some consumers still posted information about their redress seeking activities, while they were trying to obtain redress through other channels. This was a case of consumers being engaged with complaining activities outside of Facebook, but using Facebook to communicate with friends simultaneously:

“Orbitz and I have a disagreement about how airplanes should work. I think you should get what I paid for, they think they should change things without notifying me, take my money and waste hours of my time. Let's see if I can convince them I'm right.”

8.6. Observed Outcomes of Complaining on Facebook

This section discusses observed outcomes of CCB on Facebook. Three main types of outcomes were identified on the public and profile pages: a positive outcome (satisfaction), a negative outcome (dissatisfaction) and retracting. Below, these will be discussed.

8.6.1. Positive Outcomes

Complaining on public pages/groups resulted with consumers' satisfaction when (1) companies solved the initial problems, (2) directed consumers to other communication channels that might solve the problems, or (3) other consumers helped to solve or improve the problems.

When companies answered consumers' complaining posts showing that they want to help consumers to solve the problem, it usually resulted in consumer's satisfaction.

Clothing at Tesco: *"Hi, Sarah, Could you try clearing your cache and cookies on your web browser? This may help, if not let us know and we will look into this."*

Sarah: *"Hi, thanks for reply. I have cleared them and the site seems to be working now. Great customer service!"* (Clothing at Tesco)

Some companies directed consumers to other communication channels or advised them to wait for a personal message from them on Facebook:

Gap: *"Hi Lisa, We're really sorry to hear that you're not happy with your sweaters. We'll send you a personal message and try to help you out. gap@CustomerRelations"*

Lisa: *"Thank you. That's the gap-like response I am used to."* (Gap)

Consumers seemed to be content with these answers, but since the rest of the communication was undisclosed, this does not show the overall outcome. Nevertheless, this suggests that when companies show willingness to solve the problem, even if they cannot actually solve it on the spot, this still creates some satisfaction with the complaint handling on Facebook.

When there was no company interaction, sometimes consumers tried to help each other. This sort of help also created positive outcomes and satisfaction:

Juliet: *"Have you tried contacting Kindle customer services through their phone line, here is the number: +44(0)800 496 2449"*

Ben: *"I just called this number. Much better service. Thank you for suggesting"* (Amazon.com)

Richard: *"If you select the upload to cloud button, and sync before uploading the files to your computer, it saves sometime, --thou it's not going to solve your problem completely, sorry"*

Elizabeth: *"Thanks! That helped a lot"* (iTunes)

On the profile pages, almost all posts with complaints received replies from Facebook friends. Some of these replies even turned into long conversations. When consumers directly asked for help, suggestions or information on a matter, their friends answered these questions:

"Don't worry, if you know the model number, you can search for the users' manual online and they have always directions for such cases on it" (Profile page)

In other cases, consumers complained but did not ask questions (e.g. venting negative feelings). Facebook friends still replied, sometimes asking for more information about the problem and at other times making conversation:

"I have problems every time I work through one of these companies. It is much easier and cheaper to call direct to hotels, rental companies, etc." (Profile page)

Some of these daily conversations were around the topic, but sometimes friends moved to other topics. These conversations offered consumers an opportunity to share and vent their feelings, turn the negative situation into something more positive and possibly forget about the situation.

8.6.2. Negative Outcomes

On the other hand, sometimes it was observable that CCB on Facebook did not result in satisfaction. Some examples of these are when consumers were not satisfied with the admins' reply:

"So I've tried everything but all is same. I don't think I'm going to renew my contract with you after all these" (Vodafone UK)

"I don't know how long you want me to wait but it was YESTERDAY when you told me that I'm going to receive a call from your customer services, still nothing!!" (Sky)

One consumer complained about the issue of child labour on Nestlé's official page, and received a boilerplate answer from the admin thanking for the input and explaining Nestlé's other corporate responsibility activities. The consumer replied again:

"I'm not satisfied with this answer. You are just repeating what you answered to others. The cacao plan is not enough to eliminate child labour! I asked some concrete questions and a multinational enterprise that pretends to be committed to human rights should be able to give some concrete answers. So, I'll continue to post my questions." (Answer to a company response by Nestlé)

Similarly, deleting consumers' posts also created dissatisfaction. After posts were deleted, some consumers continued to post their complaints on these pages. Sometimes, they posted the original message again, but mostly they changed their posts to include information on how the company had deleted their initial post:

"I see that SKY promptly removed the complaint I posted earlier. What great customer service as they didn't even respond to my post" (Sky Sports)

Lastly, if admins did not reply to some posts while answering others, consumers regarded this as unprofessional. Most of the time, they posted again with an angrier tone, and stated their dissatisfaction:

“So tell me Nestle, what's your plan to settle this situation besides ignoring me? I'm not going away.” (Nestlé)

8.6.3. Retracting

Lastly, there were consumers who retracted their complaints after receiving comments from the company or other consumers. These consumers changed their minds or regretted their complaints. For example, Andrea who complained on Sky’s official page about the company’s program selections, timetables, choice of marketing activities and promotions for new consumers in the same post, she received the below reply from admins and retracted:

Sky: “Hi Andrea, Sorry to hear that you feel that way, but this is the way the packages have been for a while now. And this is so there are more channels available on both the entertainment and entertainment extra package. You can also check the deals we have for existing customers by logging into My Sky: <http://goo.gl/pi8vM>. And let us know if there is anything else we can do for you. - Jane

Andrea: “oh... no problem here... I don't know where that came from... just kind of fell out... you guys are cool!” (Sky)

Even though, the initial objectives and motivations of Andrea were not clear through the post, it seems that she either changed her mind about the issues, or she was satisfied with the company response and did not want to continue complaining. This suggests that in some cases the company’s response might be enough for consumers even if the company cannot provide a complete solution to the original problem.

8.7. Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of the first stage of data collection with verbatim examples from Facebook. Findings suggested that complaining on public and profile pages had similarities and differences in terms of CCB. Consumers use Facebook to complain

directly to the company, to communicate with their friends and family and also to make contact with other consumers. Even though, different Facebook sections were chosen to communicate with different parties, complaining posts mainly carried similar characteristics in terms of the nature of the complaining activities. The most common problems types of CCB on Facebook are ‘product/service problems’, ‘problems with strategic decisions’ and ‘problems with the customer services’. In terms of findings with respect to the interaction on the pages, it was observed that companies’ involvement on the page was the most important factor that created the differences on the pages/groups. Consumers’ objectives were also examined, and found to carry similarities on public and profile pages. ‘Venting’ was found to be the most common objective on the posts, followed by ‘criticism’. Also, ‘redress seeking’ had a higher frequency on the official pages which suggested that consumers consider Facebook as a direct communication method with the companies. Finally, observed outcomes of CCB on Facebook demonstrated that some consumers clearly stated their satisfaction or dissatisfaction on Facebook. However, it is not always possible to distinguish positive and negative outcomes without further investigation. Chapter 9 will report the findings of the second part of this study.

CHAPTER 9- RESEARCH FINDINGS II: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

9.1. Introduction

Following the presentation of the research findings from the first stage of data collection, this chapter presents research findings from the second stage: online in-depth interviews. The aim of this chapter is to build upon the discussion of the previous chapter by presenting consumers' own perceptions and evaluations of their complaining behaviours. 37 online in-depth interviews, which were conducted with consumers who had complained on Facebook, were analysed. Quotations from the text based interviews were used verbatim: no corrections were made to syntax and grammar errors. Additions, which aim to help readers to comprehend the text where the meaning of verbatim quotations was not apparent, were written in square brackets. The complete list of interviewees' verbatim Facebook posts can be found in Appendix 9.1.

The chapter is divided into four sections. Section 9.2 describes consumers' objectives for complaining on Facebook while Section 9.3 discusses the factors influencing CCB on Facebook. Section 9.4 explores the stages of the complaint process at which consumers complain on Facebook. In Section 9.5, consumers' anticipated and actual outcomes of complaining on Facebook are presented.

9.2. Consumers' Objectives for Complaining on Facebook

The first part of the findings describes what participants aim to achieve by using Facebook for complaining. Interviews revealed that complaining on Facebook can be used for a variety of different reasons, some of which were not apparent or clear through online observations. List of these objectives presented in Table 9.1 in the way described by participants.

Table 9. 1- Participants' Objectives for Complaining on Facebook

Participant	Self-reported Objectives	Participant	Self-reported Objectives
Alexis	Raising awareness	Sedat	Venting frustration
	Educating people		Sharing with friends
	Advising the company		Looking for suggestions
	Changing company policies		Spreading the knowledge
Ayse	Venting anger	Charlie	Raising awareness
	Seeking for psychological support		Educating people
Derin	Venting	Jimmy	Showing disapproval
	Helping friends		Criticising
	Revenge	Liam	Informing friends
	Seeking advice		Exposing the company
Tugba	Disseminating voice	Kate	Venting annoyance/frustration
	Seeking support		Revenge
	Seeking empathy		Informing others
Berna	Warning friends	Dave	Problem solving
	Seeking advice	Addison	Refund
	Venting frustration		Warning others
Emre	Venting	Nolan	Problem solving
	Connecting with friends		Improved service
	Self-presentation	Lilly	Problem solving
Mark	Venting	Audrey	Problem solving
	Sharing with friends	Olivia	Raising awareness
	Updating Facebook		Changing company policies
	Sharing ideas with others		Advising the company
Donna	Improved product	Caroline	Problem solving
Netje	Venting	Hannah	Problem solving
	Updating facebook	Katie	Problem solving
	Communicating with friends		Informing company
Melinda	Venting anger		Improved service
	Revenge	Gareth	Information sharing
	Informing company		Changing company policies/behaviours
Megan	Problem solving		Educating people
	Venting	Jessica	Venting anger & frustration
	Warning others		Changing company policies
Selin	Informing friends		Spreading information
	Helping friends	Kellan	Showing disapproval
	Revenge / hurting company		Disseminating information
	Self-presentation		Criticising
Barbara	Seeking advice	Manuel	Information sharing
	Raising awareness	Paul	Warning/helping others
	Spreading the boycott		Showing disapproval
	Changing company policies	Oscar	Criticising
	Informing people		Disseminating information
Flor	Educating people		Educating people
	Recompense of the product		Information sharing
Matt	Venting frustration	Amber	Warning others
	Problem solving		Exposing the company
	Exposing the company	Amy	Venting
	Contructive criticism		Revenge
			Exposing the company

Overall, 37 interviewees had 28 different objectives. The range of the objectives varied between purely personal complaints such as redress seeking for a failed product to completely public oriented concerns such as raising awareness against unethical policies of a company. As it can be seen in Table 9.1, the majority of the participants had multiple objectives. Some expressed that they had multiple objectives immediately, and others referred back to what they had previously said in the later parts of interview and added more information to their initial answers. For example Derin initially explained that her complaint with npower was to vent negative feelings and to get revenge by spreading negative information about the company. Later, she added other aspects to this by saying:

Derin: *“I was wondering if anybody else had an issue with this company before, you know, if somebody tells me oh I had the same problem, I did this and this to solve it, that would have helped me a lot, but I didn’t get such a response, hmm yes I also wanted to take advantage of other’s personal experiences, so it was not only about revenge”*

Derin sought revenge, vented and heard experiences of others who had been in the same situation as her with her post on Facebook. Although she had several objectives, she posted only one complaint, because she believed that she could achieve all her objectives with one post.

In some cases, consumers’ multiple objectives are related to each other. For example, Charlie stated his objectives as raising awareness and educating others which were both based on spreading information about the company and had the same audience (e.g. public), but with different purposes. However, some participants’ objectives were not in line with each other. For example, Selin’s objectives (i.e. informing and helping friends, revenge, and seeking advice) involved different purposes and targeted several groups of people.

On the other hand, seven of the participants had only one objective. Six of them (i.e. Flor, Dave, Lilly, Audrey, Caroline, Hannah) were seeking redress (e.g. recompense of the product, problem solving). This suggests that when some consumers seek redress, they focus on only this objective. The other participant with a single objective was Donna, who wanted to help Amazon to improve one of their products. She believed that Amazon used their official page for gathering information from their consumers in order to respond better to customers, and so she posted her opinions with the intention that Amazon would take note and consider her suggestions to produce a better service.

Sometimes, participants expressed the same objectives with different terms in the interviews. For example, ‘venting frustration’, ‘venting anger’ and ‘venting negative feelings’ were all categorised as ‘venting’. These were merged hereafter, for the convenience of the presentation and analysis of the data. Table 9.2 lists these objectives with frequency of each objective’s occurrence.

Table 9. 2- Frequencies of Participants’ Objectives

Objective	#	Objective	#
Advising the company	2	Recompense of the product	1
Changing company policies	5	Refund	1
Connecting with friends	1	Revenge	5
(Constructive) criticism	4	Seeking advice/suggestions	4
Disseminating voice	2	Seeking empathy	1
Educating others	5	Seeking support	2
Exposing the company	4	Self-presentation	2
Helping friends	3	Sharing with friends	4
Improved service/product	3	Showing disapproval	3
Informing company	2	Spreading the boycott	1
Informing friends	2	Updating Facebook	2
Information sharing	9	Venting	13
Problem solving	8	Warning friends	1
Raising awareness	4	Warning others	4

As Table 9.2 shows, *venting* and *problem solving* are the two most common objectives of interviewees when complaining on Facebook. On the other hand, six of the participants had unique objectives. These are ‘connecting with friends’, ‘recompense of the product’, ‘refund’, ‘seeking empathy’, ‘spreading the boycott’ and ‘warning friends’. This does not mean that these objectives are not common for Facebook complaints: this could be because of the sample characteristics or the differences in the way participants expressed their objectives. For example, Selin said that she wanted to inform her friends about the bad service she received, and she explain this as a way of her helping her friends. Berna, however, said she wanted to warn her friends. Although she did not define this as helping or informing like Selin, both of them have essentially similar motivations which were described differently.

The rest of this section presents consumers’ objectives by grouping them into three in a way to match with the three complaining actions from the Integrated Model of CCB: redress seeking, publicly complaining, and negative WOM. In order to categorise objectives, the following criteria was used. When the participants aimed to seek a kind of compensation, remedy, repair or apology, these were categorised as redress seeking. When they complained with other reasons, the audience for the post was taken into consideration to differentiate between ‘publicly complaining’ and negative WOM. Posts that aim to communicate with their friends are regarded as negative WOM, as opposed to the posts that aim to communicate with other audiences, which are considered as ‘publicly complaining’. According to this, all posts on profiles are classified as negative WOM, because consumers cannot use these to voice their messages to the public. The majority of the complaining posts from public Facebook sections are regarded as ‘publicly complaining’, because these are visible to everybody. Exceptions to this are Liam’s and Mark’s posts. Liam and Mark knew that when they posted on public pages, their friends could also see these on their news feed. Therefore,

by posting on public pages, they targeted the public and their friends simultaneously. Table 9.3 shows the categorisation of participants' objectives into three.

Table 9. 3- Participants' Objectives for Complaining on Facebook Grouped in Three Complaining Actions

Redress Seeking	Publicly Complaining	Negative-WOM
Problem solving	Advising the company	Connecting with friends
Recompense of the product	Changing company policies	Informing friends
Refund	Constructive criticism	Helping friends
	Disseminating voice	Seeking advice/suggestions
	Educating others	Seeking empathy
	Exposing the company	Seeking support
	Improved service/product	Self-presentation
	Informing company	Sharing with friends
	Information sharing	Updating Facebook
	Raising awareness	Warning friends
	Revenge	
	Showing disapproval	
	Spreading the boycott	
	Venting	
	Warning others	

The rest of this section is organized in relation to this categorisation.

9.2.1. Using Facebook for Redress Seeking

This subsection covers CCBs on Facebook which have redress seeking objectives.

Consumers use Facebook to communicate with companies while seeking redress for a variety of reasons. Some consumers complained on Facebook because they believed that this was an easy, fast and cheap method for seeking redress compared to traditional complaining channels:

Lilly: "i felt like a weight had been lifted as it [her post] was going to get seen nice and quickly rather than waiting in a massive cue and listening to stupid music"

Consumers often want to get their problems 'off their chests' quickly in their own time, rather than being kept on the phone or travelling to the place of purchase. When Lilly complained through Sky customer services' phone line, she was told to use the troubleshooting process on

Sky's official website after long waiting times on the telephone. She believed that this was an ineffective way of solving problems. However, the whole process was fast on Facebook, because there were no queues and waiting, she could voice her problem to the company whenever she wanted to, and actually received replies faster.

Consumers who knew or believed that the company's official Facebook page is monitored regularly used Facebook to seek redress, because they considered Facebook as a direct communication channel with the company:

Caroline: *"The faster online methods were Facebook as there is someone there monitoring it"*

Caroline wanted to voice her concerns to Tesco. Knowing that Tesco monitors their page regularly, she used this page to reach them because she believed that this would provide a faster solution to her problem compared to other methods.

Some consumers did not have a channel to contact directly the company, so they used Facebook:

Dave: *"[I] tried to complain through sky official website but all the person on there said that I need to call the call centre which I tried to explain that the phone service was the issue and couldn't ring them. So in the end I had to do complain through Facebook to sky"*

Dave had a problem with his landline. Initially he tried to complain on the company's official website. However, this website could not provide the service he needed. When he believed he had no other option for contacting directly the company, a friend suggested using the official Facebook page.

Other consumers complained on Facebook as a last resort after trying to contact the company through other channels to no avail:

Flor: *"I had no other choice [than to use Facebook], because I had tried all the other official channels but the phone (which I could not use because the bill would be astronomical)."*

Flor was seeking a refund or compensation from Amazon for an item she bought and never received. She initially tried to contact the company through the online chat facility of the Amazon website and through email. However, she did not receive a favourable response. She believed Facebook was the only other available channel left that she could use to communicate with the company. Therefore, she posted her problem on Facebook in the hope that Amazon would pick up the complaint through this channel.

Complaining on Facebook was also convenient for consumers who encountered problems while shopping online, as was discussed in Section 8.3:

Audrey: *"i was ordering a few things and the transaction wasn't processing.../...i decided to check if their facebook page was reporting any problems online, i saw a few that said they were having kind of the same thing so i decided to post my problem as i noticed that a member of the tesco facebook page had recently replied to someone"*

Audrey was shopping online on the 'Clothing at Tesco' website, when she encountered a problem during the transaction. Upon checking the company's Facebook page, she realized that other customers mentioned similar problems, so she decided to post her problem as well. Tesco's customer services helped her to solve the issue by replying to the post. She described the process as being efficient and quick, because she did not need to try to contact Tesco through any other channel: she was already online and simply switched from one website to another to resolve the issue.

In other cases, consumers perceived redress seeking on Facebook as public communication with the company. These participants were aware that other parties could see/view and

comment/reply to their complaints. They regarded this as an extra benefit that they could take advantage of:

Hannah: *“When ever I have a problem with a company or organization adn I am getting no response with the company I put it on facebook and the problem usually gets addressed fairly quickly.../...the only reason they did this is because I was telling the public about it as well”*

Hannah believed that customer services by phone were not as helpful to her, because her complaints remain private between her and the company, or even just the person she is speaking to. She used Facebook as recourse whenever she could not obtain results through other complaining methods. Although she actually communicates with the company, she referred to this as a public communication, because of the possibility of other customers’ involvement and the accessibility by the public. She believed these actually reinforced the service she received.

Finally, some consumers had multiple objectives along with seeking redress. One of these participants, Megan, wanted to vent and warn others while seeking redress:

Megan: *“[I hoped that] we might actually get a service rep, but that at least we would warn others of the treatment we were recieving...and prevent it happening to someone else.../...I can vent and tell them what I think [on Facebook]”*

After complaining in-store and by telephone with no success, Megan complained on Facebook. She was mainly concerned with how to solve the problem, but had additional objectives as well. This made her voice her complaint on Facebook, believing that this is the only channel that she could use to satisfy all of her objectives simultaneously.

A concluding note on redress seeking behaviours on Facebook: in general consumers used companies’ official pages for redress seeking, because these were the sections that companies

monitored. However, some of them inadvertently complained on unofficial pages as discussed in Section 8.2.1.1. This was also the case for two of the interviewees, Matt and Melinda:

Matt: *"I was totally unaware [of this page being unofficial], i will now find the official page and repost."*

They did not know that the Ryanair page that they complained on was created by another Facebook user. Since Ryanair does not have an official page, the unofficial page is misleading. Both of the participants did not realise this until the interview. They were surprised to learn this, and explained that the unresponsiveness of the page had actually increased their dissatisfaction.

9.2.2. Using Facebook for Publicly Complaining

This section discusses the complaining activities that aimed to 'publicly complain' on Facebook. These consumers complained on Facebook to communicate with the public, rather than their friends:

Kate: *"I wanted to tell people that use tesco that I had had a bad time and if there was anyone else in my position then they would agree or add their own complaint.../...I didnt want anything from them.../...I suppose I thought tesco had pi**ed me off so I would get them back by telling anyone that could see that their service is sometimes rubbish"*

Kate was unhappy because of what she considered to be the rude behaviours of Tesco employees. She did not complain in the store or through any other channel, because she did not want anything from Tesco and did not expect a response to her post. Even when admins of the page commented on her post on Facebook to ask for more information, she did not reply to this message. She expressed that it does not mean anything to her if somebody apologises only because they were told to do so, and they should have not been rude in the first instance,

or should have apologised at the time of the incident. Therefore, her objectives for complaining on Facebook were to vent her annoyance, and inform other Tesco customers.

Some participants who complained publicly had similar reasons with the participants who aimed to seek redress. Facebook being an easy, fast and cheap channel for complaining was a theme that emerged in the interviews with participants who used Facebook for ‘publicly complaining’ purposes as well:

Charlie: *“I spread it [the information] all the time and got to post it around as fast as I can”*

Charlie was using Facebook to spread information in order to raise awareness and educate others. He believed that he could do this more easily and quickly on Facebook, and also could reach more people than without Facebook.

As Table 9.3 shows there are a variety of different objectives for ‘publicly complaining’ on Facebook. Contrary to the other two categories (i.e. redress seeking and negative WOM), objectives in this category can have two different kinds of audience; the company itself and other consumers. Table 9.4 shows the objectives in this category with corresponding target audiences.

Table 9. 4- Audience of Publicly Complaining Activities

Company	Other consumers
Advising the company	Disseminate voice
Changing company policies	Educating others
(Constructive) criticism	Exposing the company
Improved product/service	Information sharing
Informing the company	Raising awareness
Showing disapproval	Revenge
Venting	Spreading the boycott
	Venting
	Warning others

While some consumers target only the company as the audience of their posts (e.g. improved product), others target only other consumers (e.g. warning others) and some, both. For example Charlie targeted only others as he wanted to raise awareness and educate consumers, but Jessica explained that she wanted to spread information about the company among others, and also to voice her concerns to the company in the hope of changing their behaviour in the future.

Venting as one of the objectives of CCB on Facebook, does not have one particular targeted audience. For some participants, venting was a secondary objective, so their audience was based on their primary objectives. Some other participants stated that they did not have a specific audience in their mind when they complained to vent:

Amy: *“I didn’t think of that before actually, I only wanted to vent, put the word out there, get it out somehow, it doesn’t matter who is going to read it in these cases”*

When Amy complained on the unofficial brand page of McDonald’s, her main objective was to vent negative feelings and she did not want to reach somebody in particular with her post. Even though her post had other objectives that could be categorised as targeting other consumers (i.e. expose the company and disseminate information), she suggested that she did not target anybody with her post. Hence, this study does not assign a particular audience for the ‘venting’ activities: consumers might voice their concerns to the company, to the other consumers, both or neither.

The separation in the target audiences is used to structure this section. Subsection 9.2.2.1 explains ‘publicly complaining’ activities that target the company, while the following subsection focuses on the activities that target other consumers.

9.2.2.1. Targeting the Company as the Audience of Complaining

This subsection covers the objectives of interviewees whose complaints targeted the company.

One of the objectives for these consumers is to show their disapproval and/or provide constructive criticism directly to the company:

Jimmy: "That was a public relations mistake. It alienated me and a lot of people that felt that way.../...In this cases, it is important to say I disagree. Otherwise they will interpret that silence as assent"

Jimmy complained on Google's official page about the lack of remembrance of Normandy landing on Google's homepage. He stated that he was unhappy, because although Google remembers and celebrates other important events, they did not pay tribute to this day. He believed criticism was a way to express opinions about companies. Hence, he did not want to stay silent about this issue, and complained to show his disapproval directly to the company on their Facebook page.

Other consumers communicated with companies on Facebook because they believed that the topic interests the public as well as the company. These consumers often suggested longer term solutions to change the company or its policies, in addition to criticising the company:

Gareth: "it wasn't a private message, it was just post on the Facebook, because messages are one thing, but I wanted to make an impact on the page so people like that page they can look at it, they can speak about it, they can click on you know and hopefully, you can hear from the Nestle's point of view"

Gareth used Facebook to communicate his ideas about what he regarded as Nestlé's unethical behaviour on the group called 'Boycott Nestle'. He was not looking for redress on a personal level, but he hoped that his comments would influence the company to change their policies that impact human and children rights. Using Facebook for this enabled him to share these

with other consumers which he believed was important, because the topic was the only way to make an impact.

Other consumers, who wanted to raise their concerns to the company publicly, mentioned other advantages of Facebook:

Olivia: If I post on facebook, even if the company takes down what I wrote, there is a chance that others have already viewed it.

Olivia essentially wanted her comments to reach Nestlé, but other consumers seeing her post was also a desired outcome for her, because she believed that it might help to increase awareness. This is why she preferred to use a public channel rather than a private communication channel with Nestlé.

Finally, some consumers voiced their concerns on Facebook in order to help the company to improve their products/services:

Donna: "It was a complaint but it was also intended to give necessary feedback so they can improve the product. The iPad is gaining in the educational sector. If they want to compete with iPad as an affordable option, (and I think they do) they need to hear from educators about issues with the product.../...If Amazon harvests Facebook for product info, as I suspect they do, The ultimate benefit would be an improved device for classroom use."

Although Donna accepted that her post was a complaint, she stated that her main objective was to give feedback to Amazon in order to help them to improve their product. In this case, Facebook was not being used as a channel to complain, but to provide feedback to produce an improved product, so not only the company but also the customers can benefit.

9.2.2.2. Targeting Other Consumers as the Audience of Complaining

This subsection presents the objectives of the participants who targeted other consumers as the audience of their posts on Facebook.

Some consumers complained publicly on Facebook in order to spread and share information with others. These consumers had objectives such as exposing the unwanted behaviours of the companies, raising awareness, showing disapproval and getting revenge. They regarded complaining on Facebook as the only way to achieve these. For example, Barbara, Kellan and Melinda have such objectives:

Barbara: “it [Facebook] has the potential to reach many people to help spread the word of what is happening and giving people information for them to then make their own minds up”

Barbara stated that Facebook was a tool to reach as many people as possible, so she used it to share information on petitions, boycotts, and events about Nestlé’s marketing for baby milk formula in deprived countries.

Kellan: “the whole point was to talk about this problem, and show my disapproval on Michael Vick’s behavior and Nike’s support on him”

Like other members of the page called ‘Boycott Nike for Signing Michael Vick’, Kellan believed Nike should not show Michael Vick as a role model due to his unethical and illegal behaviours concerning dog fights. When Kellan posted his opinions on this page, his objectives were to disseminate information about this situation and to show his disapproval on the matter while supporting the page and other members. He did not expect any personal or public outcome unlike the participants who targeted the company as an audience to their posts. He only aimed to communicate his opinions to other consumers through Facebook.

Melinda: “you just want revenge in the sense that, you don’t wanna harm someone, but you just want them to feel same way you felt”

When Melinda complained about Ryanair on Facebook, she knew that this company is unresponsive to customer complaints. However, she believed she could still make the

company's employees feel bad with her post. Considering this as a way of getting revenge, her post made her feel better.

Other interviewees have objectives that aimed to protect other consumers through warning or informing them:

Manuel: *"my main drive it could be to help others to make the most rational choice they can"*

Manuel complained on the page called 'I hate Apple'. He explained that adding information regarding his experience with iPad was a way to help others by warning them about the product.

When participants explained their objectives, they used the terms such as 'warning others', 'informing others' and 'information sharing' interchangeably. During the observations, posts that include functional information and discussions about the product and/or experience should be regarded as 'criticism' whereas posts that include attitudinal elements were considered as 'warnings'. However, interviewees did not apply such separations while defining their objectives. For example both Manuel and Amber stated that they wanted to warn others about the products and companies when they were explaining their reasons to use Facebook. Amber's post on the page 'I hate McDonald's!' has emotional elements and clearly expresses a warning- *"don't eat at Mc Donald's"*- at the end of the message. However, Manuel's post only explains the situation and finishes with a sarcastic revelation without any direct warning to the readers (see Appendix 9.1 for the posts).

Some of these participants complained on Facebook because of its high member size and potential to reach a high number of people.

Amber: *"I want everybody to know about this company, as many as possible. This is why I used Facebook"*

Amber used Facebook to warn others about an experience she had in one of the McDonald's restaurants. She believed that Facebook would help her to reach as many people as possible, because of its member size.

Moreover, other participants considered Facebook not only as a tool to reach more people but also as a tool to reach consumers who like that particular company:

Alexis: *"because I wanted to see as many people as possible what happens in the ivory coast and especially people that "like" nestle and visit their facebook page"*

Alexis explained that one of the reasons for using the official Nestlé page was the anticipated audience of the page. Since Facebook users who 'like' company's pages are notified by the news and updates about the page. Alexis believed that this was an easy way to reach consumers who like the company and share his opinions with them.

Finally, some interviewees did not regard their CCBs on Facebook as complaints per se. These consumers had other purposes such as educating others or spreading boycott against the company. They used Facebook as a communication tool with other consumers, rather than considering it as a channel for complaining:

Charlie: *"I know them [his posts] effecting someone, you know, that... is the reason what I do, I do online is I just want people to think. I don't care what they do, I don't care what they say, they believe, I just want them to know"*

Charlie continuously used Facebook to reach other people in order to raise awareness about companies, and educate people. His post that led to the interview was about the working conditions of Nike factories in Indonesia. However, he explained that he uses Facebook, and some other online channels such as Twitter and his blog in order to draw attention to several topics that bothers him.

9.2.3. Using Facebook for Negative WOM

This section presents the objectives of participants who engaged in negative WOM on Facebook. Most of these participants describe Facebook as the easiest and quickest way of communicating with all of their friends and family members at once:

Sedat: *“The advantage of Facebook is to reach a lot of people at the same time, at least they can all know about this situation, and simply put, they will have a suspicion about that company. In the past, the closest thing to this, for example in my Facebook I have I guess around 500, 560, dunno, not sure about the exact number now, I had to find phone numbers of all of them and call them to say look I had an issue with UPS”*

For Sedat, one of the most important aspects of communicating via Facebook is to be able to reach all his friends simultaneously without expending extra effort. In this sense, some reasons for engaging in negative WOM on Facebook (i.e. Facebook being a fast, easy, free, and informal communication channel) are same with the motives of using Facebook for other complaining actions:

Berna: *“the reason I chose Facebook is to reach my friends by using the fastest and the most extensive way, so to use the power of Facebook”*

Berna used the term of ‘power of Facebook’ to indicate the advantages of Facebook being a computer-mediated communication channel such as the speed, easiness and ability to reach a group of people at the same time.

Sometimes, consumers not only want to communicate with their friends, but also warn them about the problems that they encountered as a functional message to protect them from faulty products or services. Berna’s below post is an example for this:

Berna: *“DON’T BUY CANON CAMERAS, PEOPLE!”*

In the interview, Berna explained that all Canon cameras of a certain product line had the same defect. In the hopes that Canon would admit the fault and provide compensation of some kind, she initially contacted Canon customer services. However, the response she received suggested that Canon did not plan a product recall or withdrawal of the products from the market due to this problem. When she learned about this case, she wanted to warn her friends to protect them from buying the same flawed product:

Berna: *“my aim was not to complain to Canon because I knew that they weren’t going to do anything about this, because they did not want to protect their customers, using Canon official page for complaining would have been completely pointless, actually I had never ever thought about it, because my responsibility was to warn, inform my own friends”*

Consumers who wanted to warn and/or inform their friends, like Berna, usually complained on their profiles. However, two of the participants who complained on public pages (i.e. Liam and Mark) explained that they actually wanted to inform their friends as well as the public. Liam explained this as:

Liam: *“facebook will make sure my audiences are focused.../[such as] my friends, and the other people who don't like Apple's products :)”*

Liam knew Facebook shares users’ recent activities with their friends through news feed. Therefore, he suggested that when he posts something to a public page, Facebook will show this to his friends, and the other members of the page. Therefore, he can inform his friends and expose the company to the public at the same time.

Consumers who complained to communicate with friends sometimes aim to seek help from them. This help could be in the form of support, empathy, advice or suggestions:

Selin: *“It has actually two aspects, one is to ask people [her friends] advice and to complain about it, because I knew I was going to quit Turkcell anyways, there wasn’t anything left to do, so I thought I shall complain about it to hurt the company a bit and also I shall get err get some ideas from friends”*

Selin complained about a mobile service provider and aimed to get revenge while seeking advice about other companies. She received a lot of responses after this complaint: some of her friends gave advice and others contributed with their bad experiences. Eventually, this post became a discussion board between her and her friends to share their opinions and experiences about mobile phone companies. Even though, she did not intend to use her post as a venting mechanism in the beginning, she realised afterwards that her friends’ comments actually made her feel much better.

Similarly, other participants, such as Ayse and Tugba, hoped that their friends can offer them some psychological support on Facebook by commenting on their posts. They claimed that the only way to feel satisfied after an online complaint was to receive comments from others or engage in other online social activities. They believed venting is possible only after social interactions. Therefore, their objective to vent was based on getting responses to their complaints:

Ayse: *“actually, my point was not to grumble about this complaint, my point was, I was stuck in somewhere for an hour, so I needed a discharge, but it [the point] wasn’t to complain about the company.../...the success of your post is totally correlated with the amount of answers you receive, if it turns about to be a nice conversation with, dunno, let’s say, 10-12 people, then of course you feel completed relieved. But if you don’t receive any answers at all, you cannot have a relief so you cannot really vent”*

Ayse previously explained that she did not believe that the company would improve its services, so her complaints on Facebook had only personal objectives, such as venting

feelings or asking suggestions from friends. She suggested that the act of posting the message only helped her to feel a bit better, but she needed to receive comments on her post to vent completely. In her experience, if these responses turn into conversations with friends, she forgets the negative aspect of the incident and remembers it as a pleasant conversation which eventually provided some sort of relaxation.

Another common objective of negative WOM on Facebook is to share feelings with friends. Facebook users share both positive and negative information and experiences on their profiles. The extent of sharing varies for Facebook users as some share more than others. When the participants who share extensively encountered problems or felt dissatisfaction, they complained on Facebook to share this, in a similar way to what they always share on their profiles:

Sedat: *"I was very upset, I remember coming at home, after I arrive, then, I was already very angry because the parcel hasn't arrived yet anyway, Facebook was there and on, so I just typed what was in my mind, like always"*

Netje: *"I, err... express the feeling on my Facebook or express any feeling on the wall anyhow.../...this is how I do all the time, I write it so friends will know and understand it"*

Both Netje and Sedat explained that they use Facebook to keep in touch with their friends constantly. According to Netje, communicating on Facebook is possible through sharing important updates from her life, and talking about her feelings. When she complained on her profile, she was feeling disappointed and aimed to share this with her friends. Sedat admitted that he often shares important information from his life on Facebook with friends. His complaint on Facebook was not planned as a complaint, but rather it was an impulse decision. For both of them, these activities were part of their Facebook norm.

For other consumers, negative WOM on profiles served as self-presentation like everything else that they share on Facebook. When these participants constructed their complaints, they considered the content and tone of their messages in terms of what they believed would be the best for their self-presentation. For example, some believed that continuously moaning on Facebook creates a bad image and negative impressions about the person, so they tried to include humorous or creative elements to make their posts interesting:

Mark: *“I want them to see... oh you know.... ‘He is actually thought of this to make it creative’ ...”*

Mark explained that he believed that this was a way to turn the complaints and the negative situation into something constructive and positive. In these cases, complaining on Facebook hold concerns other than traditional complaining activities in particular to the representation of identity and reaching out to others.

Finally, some consumers complained on profiles, because of their ignorance about other possibilities on Facebook:

Derin: *“ermm, I don’t know how to put something like this on a different place than my status, erm, I never came across with something like that, and never occurred to me that I can do something different”*

Derin was not aware that companies have official pages on Facebook that they regularly monitor, and consumers can post on these pages if they wanted to. At the end of the interview, she remarked that she learned a lot during the interview, and she would be checking on public spaces on Facebook for the complaining purposes in the future.

9.3. Factors Influencing Complaining on Facebook

This section presents the findings related to the factors influencing CCB on Facebook. For the purposes of this study, organisational, situational and technological factors influencing complaining on Facebook were explored. Some of these factors were discussed in the other sections (e.g. likelihood of success in Section 9.5.1, and problem types in Section 8.3). The following three sub-sections explore the rest.

9.3.1. Organisational Factors

Some participants complained on Facebook because they believed that the company was not responsive to consumer complaints in other platforms or in general. In these cases, consumers' objectives were not to communicate with the company, but rather with friends or other consumers:

Melinda: *"No, you can't complain to them, because they are not, they don't listen to you, they don't care"*

When Melinda complained about Ryanair, she already had negative experiences with the company's customer services. She stated that she knew that they are unresponsive, and instead she used Facebook to communicate with others, vent and get revenge.

However, some other participants complained on Facebook about the companies that they perceived as highly responsive:

Flor: *"I've been a faithful Amazon customer since 1987 and nothing like this EVER happen. I live in a country where online services are notoriously bad, and I had a lot of trust in the company."*

Flor's complaint on Facebook was different from Melinda's. She perceived the company as a highly responsive company, and when she had a negative experience with their customer

services, she wanted to give them another chance to perform as the way she used to. Therefore, she used an official page to seek redress as a direct communication method.

Exit barriers and availability of alternatives also emerged as organisational factors that effect CCB on Facebook. One participant mentioned lack of alternatives as the reason to continue with the patronage, despite experiencing dissatisfaction:

Mark: *“if I had another option besides iTunes, I would probably use it but there isn't.”*

As Mark clearly stated lack of alternatives prevented him from exit. Knowing that he cannot leave the company, he used Facebook to share his frustration with others, as he did not have any other alternative.

9.3.2. Situational Factors

Participants talked about level of dissatisfaction and severity of the problem in relation to their complaints. Some participants suffered from severe cases and experienced high level of dissatisfaction. In these cases, some used Facebook to communicate with the company directly (e.g. Addison), and others regard Facebook as a mechanism to share information with friends and vent (e.g. Derin).

On the other hand, there were participants who complained on Facebook without experiencing a severe problem:

Tugba: *“I didn't think it's that crucial to do something else about this... I was sitting in front of the TV and watching this ad, and then I thought about this, and I was holding my iPhone anyway so just automatically typed it.”*

Tugba, complained about a TV advertisement. She did not consider this as a severe case, but still wanted to share what she felt about it. Facebook was a channel already available to her at the time, so she complained on this channel.

Interviews showed that perceived lack of procedural, distributive and interaction justice influenced participants' CCB as well. An example from each one of these follows. Berna believed the outcome of her complaint was not fair (i.e. distributive justice), because Canon did not accept the product fault even though it was a production problem. She wanted to inform as many people as possible about this (see Section 9.2.3). Matt, on the other hand, experienced a lack of procedural justice (i.e. fairness of the process) with Ryanair due to lack of quality in their services. He believed exposing the company on Facebook would help him to vent. Lastly, Kate suffered from unfairness of the interpersonal relationships (i.e. interactional justice):

Kate: *"I had money to spend and the lady on the desk was rude....so because she had upset me I took everything back and bought from somewhere else.....tesco staff and generally rude"*

Kate was unhappy because of the way she was treated by Tesco employees. She wanted to tell everybody else what happened to her so that others can learn the truth. She believed that this was a way that she could avenge what happened to her, and restore the justice.

As problem types were presented in Section 8.3, this discussion is not repeated here. However, interviews revealed an important finding about one of the categories in Section 8.3: 'no reason stated'. Three of the interviewees explained why they did not explain the problem in their complaints. Tugba, who complained about a television advert, assumed that all her friends would have seen the advert so she believed there was no need to explain the details of her disappointment. Berna advised on her profile not to buy any Canon cameras to her friends, but did not explain the reasons. She later confessed that she actually knew this was not enough to make her point, but wanted to create curiosity and interest among her friends. She anticipated receiving questions about this which would give her a chance to explain the

situation later in detail. Finally, Sedat's post was mainly about venting, so he did not plan or pay attention the content of his post:

Sedat: *"Genuinely I was SO pissed off at that moment, I just wrote it like that without planning"*

It is possible that when consumers like Sedat wanted to vent, they did not include details to their posts, because they did not have any other motives such as redress seeking or informing others. Hence, they only said whatever they wanted to say.

9.3.3. Technological Factors

All participants suggested that ease and convenience of using Facebook was an important factor on their CCB on Facebook. For some, this was about being able to complain for free (e.g. Flor), for some others, this was because of the speed of using Facebook (e.g. Tugba), and for others it meant being able to communicate with all friends simultaneously (e.g. Sedat) or with the public (e.g. Alexis).

Moreover, the technological infrastructure of Facebook provides flexibility and immediacy to some consumers:

Lilly: *"[I'm] alot of the time alot happier as the problem can be solved rather quicker than what it can over the phone and as i have facebook on my phone it means no hanging around waiting for phone calls and things like that"*

Lilly suggested that she could use her mobile phone to complain, or keep track of her complaint at any time. This provides an extra flexibility for consumers, as they do not need computers to communicate with the companies and other consumers.

The design and structure of Facebook also influenced online CCB. The display of the posts and comments is one of the factors: participants believed that the location of these on their

screen encourages users to share and communicate with each other. For example, Berna suggested that the location of the ‘comment’ button subconsciously invites users to join discussions:

Berna: *“the best thing about this is the comment box of each post, that attracts people to comment, argue, talk about things on Facebook. For example, when you read something, normally you will automatically think a response to it and if you see that box there calling for you to write something, it makes you want to put your comment there”*

Similarly, Mark explained that some features of Facebook such as tagging (e.g. creating links between different Facebook sections) provide feelings of satisfaction and accomplishment, because these look nice on the screen:

Mark: *“they kindda constructed those boxes and, and... the posts all that stuff erm, in a way to give you satisfaction for having an accomplishment. you now like ‘woow I’ve created a post, I see it right in the top so it makes me think that everybody else sees that top right... and automatically’, and all other that ‘oh look that little @ tags I’ve added and made links looks really cool’”*

The second characteristic of Facebook’s design is the ability to select who can view the posts. If users want to reach a particular group of people, they can arrange their post to be seen by that group of people. For example, if consumers want to reach other consumers of a company, they can use user-created groups of that company. In this way, Facebook helps consumers to shape their complaining activity in a way to voice their complaints to their preferable audience.

Twitter as a competitor to Facebook was noteworthy in some participants’ complaining activities. Two main themes were revealed about complaining on Twitter in the interviews. First is that the audience of Twitter is somewhat different to Facebook’s audience. Some participants mentioned that they have different groups of people as connections on Twitter

and Facebook. For example, Donna's connections on Twitter were her colleagues and other work related contacts whereas on Facebook she connected with personal friends. When these participants complained, they selected the website (i.e. Twitter or Facebook) based on who they wanted to talk to. The second was to use Twitter to potentially increase the audience. Some participants (e.g. Charlie and Mark) believed different people use Facebook and Twitter. Therefore, they complained on both Facebook and Twitter in order to reach as many people as possible.

Finally, another theme that emerged in the interviews was consumers' Facebook norms. As also discussed in Section 9.2.3 some complaining activities were not planned as complaints, but rather had similarities with consumers' usual Facebook behaviours. In a sense, some consumers complained on Facebook as a part of their normalised Facebook behaviour:

Manuel: *"they usually in the group they expose somethings that they aren't usually advertising, they are the secondary effects of having a product of that kind, so this was one of those experiences that they weren't very good and I thought I could share this to accumulate with all that data..."*

Manuel complained on the page 'I hate Apple'. As a member of the page, he was already participating in the discussions on this page, and he regarded the page as one of his information sources. When he experienced a problem of his own, he complained about this aiming to share this information with other members, and help them. In this way, he hoped to contribute to the page, rather than voicing his complaint.

9.4. Stages in the Complaint Process

This section focuses on the discussion of the stages of the complaint process at which consumers complain on Facebook. Tronvoll (2012) explains that the 'complaint process' is a dynamic process that can be considered as a network of complaint activities, which starts with

a trigger caused by a negative incident. In this study, the term ‘complaint process’ is used to specify the combination of both online and offline activities that a consumer engages in following a particular unsatisfactory experience. For some participants, the complaint process was only comprised of complaining activities on Facebook, but others engaged with other complaining actions before or after Facebook. Emre, for example, stated that he first complained on Facebook, and then called customer services. On the other hand, Megan tried all offline methods available to her before complaining on Facebook as a last resort. Overall, it is identified that consumers complain on Facebook at four stages in the complaint process: (1) in the beginning as the first or only complaint, (2) as a fall-back complaint in-between other complaints, (3) simultaneously with other complaining activities, and (4) at the end as the final complaint. This section analyses participants’ use of Facebook in relation to these stages in order to understand the role of Facebook in the entire complaint process.

9.4.1. First or Only Complaining

Some consumers complained on Facebook at the beginning of their complaint process immediately after the dissatisfactory experience. If consumers were satisfied with the results of this complaint or did not want to continue complaining, these were the only complaining actions in their particular complaint process. In these cases, Facebook substitutes the traditional complaining channels. Interviewees complained on Facebook as the first complaint on their profiles, on the official pages, on the anti-brand pages or on the issue-specific pages.

When the first complaint was on profile pages consumers either wanted to communicate or vent their feelings to their friends before complaining to the company or they believed that there was no solution to their problem. In the latter, consumers used their profiles to have conversations about the problem:

Ayse: *“as I said, when I want a solution, I don’t use here [Facebook], the whole point of those places [official pages of companies] is to solve the problems, and I don’t really believe a problem can be solved through here [Facebook]”*

Ayse explained that she did not believe that Facebook could actually help to solve the problems. Hence, when she complained on her profile, it was only a form of negative WOM.

There were different reasons to post first complaints on the official pages. Some participants stated that they complained on Facebook, if they want to voice their concerns both to the company and customers of the company, rather than having a private conversation with company:

Alexis: *“that’s not only between me and the company, it involves other people too”*

Alexis believed that this problem should be discussed in a public space, because it was not a personal problem, but it is an important public issue which is required to be known by other customers of the company as well. Therefore, he preferred to complain on the official brand page of the company, because it is publicly accessible.

Participants who complained on the official pages for redress seeking purposes as the first complaint already knew that the company was responsive to consumer input on their Facebook page. Caroline for example, who was discussed in Section 9.2.1, used the official brand page to begin with as she knew the company uses this page as a channel for customer services. Since admins of the page helped her, and she did not need to use another channel.

Others complained on an official page as the first complaint when they want an easy and convenient direct contact with the company. For example Jimmy complained on Google’s official page in order to criticise the company. Since their main motivations were to show

disapproval/criticism of the company's behaviours on a platform which is visible to the company, hence he did not complain in another channel.

Pages that are created for specific issues are also used for first complaining. Some of these participants deliberately chose to complain on this page, because they wanted to focus on the particular topic of their complaints, rather than generic problems about company. For others, the page was both the source of information and a channel to complain:

Jessica: *"Purely the fact that I saw a post 'shared' by someone else – it appeared on my wall, if I remember correctly. Once I followed the story, I discovered the atrocious acts perpetrated by this man. I did read the page before complaining. Many other people were also expressing their horror and outrage – I just added my voice (opinion)."*

Jessica complained about Nike being the sponsor of Michael Vick on a page that was specially created to address this issue. She stated that she complained on this page immediately after she learned about the situation by a post from a friend.

Participants also used hatred pages for the first and only complaints. Two participants in this category (i.e. Liam and Manuel) were already members of these pages before making their complaints. They explained that they have been following others' posts on the pages regularly for informative purposes. When they also had a personal experience with the company, they wanted to share this with others (see Manuel in Section 9.3.3).

9.4.2. Fall-Back Complaining

Some participants complained on Facebook as a channel to fall-back when they did not receive expected or satisfactory outcome through their other complaining activities. In other words, for these consumers Facebook was an alternative complaining channel that is used after complaining on other channels and before losing hope completely.

When participants complained on Facebook as a channel to fall-back on, they only used official pages, and had redress seeking objectives. Some of these participants knew that these pages were used as a channel for customer services by the company. They regarded these pages as direct communication channels with the company that could be used for redress seeking. For example, Lily knew that Sky's customer service employees respond to complaints on Sky's official page, so she decided to fall back on this channel instead of trying traditional complaining channels again:

Lilly: *"on the phone all I ever get told is to use the trouble shoot process and having to use it so many times already I know the process off my heart"*

Lilly did not receive the help she needed through phone conversations with the company. Having complained on Facebook before about the same company, she already knew that Sky offers customer services on their page, so she decided to fall back on Facebook.

However, other participants, complained on Facebook as a fall-back channel, without knowing how the official pages work:

Addison: *"I simply searched for Amazon on Facebook, found it and did not read the page before complaining"*

After using the online chat facility of the Amazon and sending emails to them, Addison was looking for other options that he could use to communicate with this company. Although he did not visit Amazon's page before his problem, he decided to complain there to try it as a channel to fall-back on.

9.4.3. Simultaneous Complaining

Simultaneous complaining can be seen on the profiles, official pages, unofficial pages and anti-brand pages. These consumers complain on Facebook as a supplement to their on-going complaining activities.

Some participants (e.g. Derin and Donna) used their profiles and official pages simultaneously while they used other channels to complain to the company directly. Their use of Facebook was supplementary to other complaints that were used to solve the problem. They used Facebook to notify others of the progress of the problem and/or of their feelings.

Other participants who complained on Facebook simultaneously used Facebook as part of an existing boycott. These participants complained on official, unofficial and anti-brand pages. Since their main motivation was to spread information as much as possible, they generally chose Facebook sections based on its member size and audience regardless of the type of the page:

Olivia: *“I complained on their page because I wanted them and others who love nestle to know that this product is unethical”*

Olivia complained on the official brand page simultaneously with her other boycott-related activities. She explained that she specially picked the official page, so that she could communicate with the company and consumers who like this company.

Another participant, Charlie, who complained about Nike’s factory conditions on an unofficial page, explained that when he complained, he did not aim to target any specific type of audience. He wanted to share his opinions and did not pay attention to the page itself. Hence, it did not matter for him as long as the page helps him to reach other consumers.

9.4.4. Final Complaining

There were also some participants who used Facebook at the end of the complaint process. These are the consumers who have complained through other methods to no avail, and still want to voice their complaints on Facebook one last time as a final effort or to note their exit. All Facebook sections were used for final complaining.

For some of these participants, complaining on Facebook was the last resort. They usually wanted to reach the company and for this reason they complained on official pages but one of them, Megan, tried a user-created page as the last resort:

Megan: *"[I became a member of this page] a few months after I gave up trying to get it fixed... I had contacted company numerous times and consumer affairs to no avail.../...we were getting no help from anywhere, simply wanted to try this as the last one thing"*

Megan explained that after trying to contact Vodafone for months through traditional channels, she gave up and became a member of an issue-specific page against Vodafone. When she posted her complaint on this page she knew that it was not an official page, but she hoped to get Vodafone's attention, and additionally warn others.

For some other participants, final complaints were not a last resort, but a final note on what they experienced. These participants aimed to share information in order to warn, help, protect others and vent:

Melinda: *"I know they won't do nothing, ok, I know they won't change anything, just because of my complaint... I can't do nothing and... whatever I'm gonna say is not gonna change anything, at least, I want to take out my anger, ok?"*

Melinda complained on the Ryanair unofficial page after trying to solve her problem through company's customer services. Although she did not expect anything after her post on Facebook, she wanted to post it in order to vent her anger and inform other people about Ryanair as one the last move, because she believed she could at least do this for other people.

Also, there are participants who complained on hatred pages as their final complaints (i.e. Oscar and Amber). After receiving unsatisfactory results or no replies from the companies, these consumers had developed strong negative feelings towards the company. They chose

hatred pages to show these feelings to the public. Hence their main objectives include spreading negative information about the company and warning others:

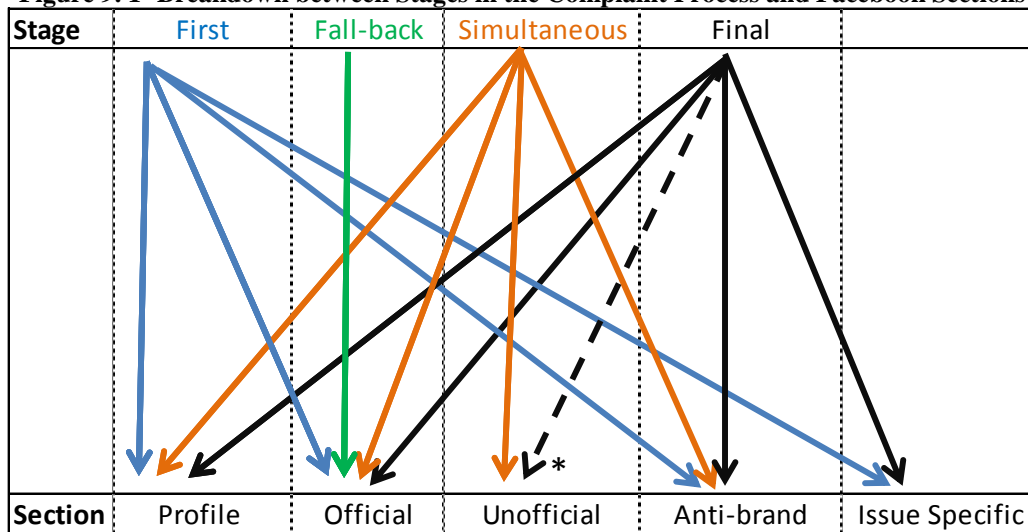
Oscar: *“People should know what is behind them [Ryanair] and their reputation and their prestige should be degraded and people should know. People should know when they do business with this kind of airlines, not only they are wasting their money, but they are putting their lives at stake, and the lives of many other people, because god forbid if one of these days, one of those travelling coffin pots, flying coffin pots fall from the sky, and there is people in the ground as well as the people on board in the aircraft, well eventually lose their lives”*

Oscar had a variety of different problems with Ryanair in a long time period. He eventually decided to exit, mainly because of the problems what he considered to be the unsafe practices and behaviours. He believed that he should inform other passengers by spreading this information. For this purpose, he used the page called ‘I hate Ryanair’ which he identified as *“a place where the sensibility was similar to his”*. He explained that this page was also good source of information, because it showed the problems about the company from a variety of different aspects. Hence, he wanted to contribute with a note of his exit.

9.4.5. Evaluation of the Stages in the Complaint Process

Overall, there is no a clear concentration of the selection of Facebook sections based on the stages of complaining. Figure 9.1 shows the breakdown between the four stages and Facebook sections that were used by interviewees.

Figure 9. 1- Breakdown between Stages in the Complaint Process and Facebook Sections



*These participants did not know the pages are unofficial and believed that they posted on the official page.

Participants used *official pages* at every stage in their complaint process. Since these are the sections that are visible to the company and the consumers of the company, they are suitable for all types of complaining.

Profile pages, on the other hand, most of the time cannot be used to reach the company because the majority of the Facebook users' privacy settings do not let the companies access this information. Participants used their profiles at every other stage except for fall-back complaining which is considered as a way to communicate with the company.

Anti-brand pages were also used at every stage except for fall-back complaining. Since these are user-created pages that usually do not include company participation, consumers did not consider these as a method to communicate with the company, but rather used them to communicate with others.

Unofficial pages were used only for simultaneous and final complaining. Apart from the cases that consumers were not aware that the page was unofficial, these were mostly used as a

supplement to the other complaints in order to raise awareness, warn and/or educate others or simply vent negative feelings due to an on-going complaining activity.

Pages with specific issues were used either for the first or the last complaints. The consumers who complained on these pages as the first complaint usually wanted to focus on that particular issue, rather than generic problems. On the other hand, consumers who complained on these pages as final complaint when they had developed strong negative feelings against the company and wanted to voice these either to vent or to note their exit.

9.5. Outcomes

The last section of this chapter provides a discussion about consumers' anticipated and actual outcomes regarding their complaints on Facebook. Section 9.5.1 discusses what interviewees anticipated the outcomes of their CCB on Facebook would be, and Section 9.5.2 presents the actual outcomes of these.

9.5.1. Anticipated Outcomes

Interviews revealed that it is not always easy to identify consumers' expectations through observations. Therefore, observed outcomes might be misleading in terms of determining customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction. For example, when Sedat posted the message "*Never again UPS*" on his profile, it was not clear that one of his objectives was 'seeking suggestions from friends':

Sedat: *"for example, friends can say that don't do business with UPS, but use this other one.../...that's important because people usually pick their friends from the people who have similar opinions, same taste, share same treats, so I value my friends suggestions and Facebook makes it possible to reach all of your friends"*

Sedat did not directly ask for suggestions in his post but he explained that when he posted the message about UPS, he hoped to receive responses from friends suggesting alternative companies.

Moreover, some participants did not need to receive replies to feel satisfied about their posts, and sometimes even a response from the company was not regarded as a positive outcome. Therefore, for some consumers, even posts without any replies provided satisfaction:

Kellan: *“the important point was to show support to this page and people who boycott Nike and say that they are doing the right thing. I only wanted my voice to be heard by others and I achieved this so I’m happy after all.”*

Kellan’s main aims were to disseminate information and criticise the situation. He believed that he managed to achieve these with his post, although he did not receive any replies.

Kate: *“no, that was not a proper apology, not really cos its what they get paid to do.../... the customer service rep was going to tell the manager of my local store on my behalf but I told them not to bother cos it wouldnt really achieve anything..”*

Kate did not reply to the comment she received from Tesco’s customer services which asked for more information on her experience. She explained that it did not mean anything to her if somebody apologises when they were told to do so, because she would know it was not genuine. Observations might regard receiving a reply from the company as a positive outcome of the post. However, in Kate’s case, since she did not want to communicate with Tesco again, the reply from company did not help her to feel better.

Since the expectations on outcomes might differ according to the audience of the post (i.e. friends and/or the public), this section is divided into two subsections exploring these separately.

9.5.1.1. Anticipated Outcomes of Complaining on Profile Pages

This subsection reviews the anticipated outcomes of complaints on consumers' profiles. All participants who complained on their profiles hoped to receive feedback from friends in the form of replies and/or 'likes'. However, there were different expectations in terms of the content of the replies. Some participants were happy with any conversation related or unrelated to the initial complaint:

Derin: *"in order to complete it [the complaint] somebody needs to reply to that status message.../...otherwise it is as if it is empty, like an incomplete conversation, as if I am talking to myself"*

Derin explained that if nobody replies to her posts, she feels that her complaint was unresolved. She believed that the answers do not always need to provide a solution, as sometimes it is not possible to solve the problem. For her, seeing that somebody acknowledges her complaint, and cares enough to reply was enough to feel better.

Some other participants preferred answers with unrelated topics, believing that these might lead to entertaining conversations:

Ayse: *"I think that is [satisfaction at the end] completely directly proportional with the amount of answers you receive, that is if you start chatting, having fun and enjoying that will make you really relieved, so that it does not need to be directly solving your problem"*

Ayse hoped to receive comments from friends to be able to vent. She believed that the actual act of writing the post only helped a little, but that real relaxation and venting happens only if she receives responses from friends. If several friends join the conversation, and it becomes a pleasant chat among friends, this helps her to forget about her problems.

Participants in this category believed that, as Ayse described *"the more replies a post receive, the better the outcome"*. In this way, they hoped to forget about the negative experience, and

eventually remember it with a positive outcome. This was a negative experience turning into something positive for them. Additionally, one participant, Emre, also believed that conversations on Facebook helped him to bond with friends regardless of the topic of discussion. According to him, the topic of the original post was irrelevant, and all Facebook conversations help to strengthen friendships.

For other participants, a conversation itself was not enough to provide satisfaction. They wanted to have a conversation about the topic that they originally complained about:

Tugba: *“if I had seen more support, for example seeing other people being agreed with me, also having a discussion with them about this matter, giving ideas to each other, then I would have felt satisfied.”*

Tugba wanted to have a conversation around the topic of her complaint. She believed that the problem was an important issue that concerned the public. Therefore, she expected her friends to pay attention to this topic, and comment on her post. In this way they could have a discussion or debate about this issue and they might have learnt more about it. However, she felt disappointment, because she did not receive such comments.

Other participants who complained on profiles expected to receive comments that would help them to solve the problem, instead of having conversations with friends.

Berna: *“...if there was somebody who experienced such as thing before, getting an advice from him like ‘do this and this, try that and that, look from this website’ etc, or I had friends who are experts on this topic, for example, who know about the cameras from the technical side, they could have brought a new view”*

When Berna complained on her profile, she hoped to receive advice from their friends that might help her. For Berna, and other participants like her, complaining on their profile pages was another way to look for solutions or support from friends.

9.5.1.2. Anticipated Outcomes of Complaining on Public Pages/Groups

Consumers' anticipated outcomes regarding their complaining on the public pages/groups are discussed in this subsection. Participants who complained on the public pages/groups had a variety of different expectations. Firstly, not every participant hoped to receive replies from the others or the companies. Some stated that they did not expect or even care to receive replies. These participants only wanted to voice their complaints without any expectation in return. For example, Charlie's objectives to complain on Facebook were to raise awareness and educate people (see Section 9.2.2.2). Therefore, as long as other people read his posts and thought about these, he was indifferent in the matter of receiving comments. Another example was Paul who wanted to address his criticism directly to the company. He explained that he wanted to show his disapproval on a channel that normally receives a lot of praise from customers. He knew that other consumers were not going to comment on his post because he believed that members of these pages were the fans of the company, and they would not like to see his post.

On the other hand, some participants wanted to receive replies from companies. Some of them expected direct redress as an outcome in the form of repairs or compensation. For example, Flor expected to receive a replacement for the product that got lost in the post, and Dave hoped Sky would solve the problem with his phone line. For some participants receiving information from the company regarding their complaint was enough:

Addison: “[the satisfactory outcome would be] a manager letting me know when to expect my package”
--

Addison's main objective was to obtain a refund for the products that he had paid for but not received. However, he regarded that receiving information from a manager of Amazon about his complaint would be a sufficient outcome.

Some participants wanted companies to change policies, behaviours and strategies in the long term. Although, they knew that it was not possible to get rapid change on Facebook about their complaints, they still wanted to see that companies acknowledged their comments and would do something to solve the problems:

Alexis: *“and i was especially disappointed after my proposed some solutions...nestle again just posted this standard answer without adressing my proposals”*

Alexis wanted to raise awareness and spread information about Nestlé to others, but he also hoped to communicate directly with Nestlé to offer them possible solutions. One of his objectives was to make the company change their policies in the future. He hoped Nestlé would answer with tailored information that addresses the particular issues that he raised. He explained that only that would have made him feel that the company was actually taking his comments seriously. One of these participants, Donna, explained that she believed that if she gave up time to provide feedback to the company, they should at least offer an acknowledgement in return. Moreover, without a reply from the company she was unsure about the effectiveness of her post.

Finally, some participants hoped to receive replies from other consumers on Facebook. These were the consumers who wanted to communicate with others, instead of the company itself. For example, a positive outcome for Barbara was to receive replies from others. She wanted to raise awareness and believed that conversations were opportunities to inform other consumers.

9.5.2. Actual Outcomes and Satisfaction

This section discusses the actual outcomes and participants' satisfaction and dissatisfaction regarding their complaints on Facebook. Interviews showed that it is not always easy to observe the outcomes and (dis)satisfaction. Even posts that did not receive any comments

might be considered to have a positive outcome by consumers. For example, neither Jimmy nor Kellan received any feedback to their posts, but both of them stated that they were satisfied after complaining on Facebook. They explained that their main objective was to voice their opinions, and they were happy with the overall experience because Facebook provided a chance to perform this. Similarly, Matt and Kate were satisfied simply because they could vent their negative feelings on Facebook, regardless of receiving feedback or redress.

Overall, 26 of the interviewees were satisfied with the outcome of their Facebook posts while eleven of them were not. Table 9.5 lists satisfied and unsatisfied participants with the reasons for their (dis)satisfaction.

Table 9. 5- Reasons of (Dis)satisfaction with the Complaints on Facebook

SATISFIED			DISSATISFIED		
Reason	Total #	Participants	Reason	Total #	Participants
Believed the post was effective	10	Alexis, Barbara, Charlie, Jimmy, Liam, Gareth, Kellan, Manuel, Oscar, Amber	Lack of responses from the company	4	Donna, Megan, Addison, Jessica
Problem solved	6	Dave, Nolan, Audrey, Caroline, Hannah, Katie	Believed the company response was unsatisfactory	3	Lilly, Olivia, Paul
Vented	5	Melinda, Matt, Sedat, Kate, Amy	Lack of responses from friends	3	Ayse, Derin, Tugba
Received responses	2	Emre, Selin	Believed response from friends was unsatisfactory	1	Berna
Felt accomplishment	1	Mark			
Received approval	1	Netje			
Received compensation	1	Flor			
TOTAL	26		TOTAL	11	

Ten out of 26 participants, who aimed to raise awareness, educate others and show disapproval of the company, were satisfied with their complaints on Facebook. Although, seven of these ten participants- Alexis, Charlie, Jimmy, Gareth, Kellan, Oscar and Amber- did not receive any relevant and/or useful feedback which would prove the influence of their posts, they still considered their posts effective in terms of passing on information. Some of them even believed that it was not possible to be certain about the actual outcome:

Alexis: *"I think it would be pretentious to state they I'm sure that somebody changed his behaviour because of my post"*

When there were no replies (e.g. Alexis' posts on Nestlé page), participants recognised that they cannot know the actual outcome of their posts. A reply that showed support would have made them happy and satisfied, but they did not consider lack of response as a bad sign. As Charlie stated *"I don't care what they say, they believe, I just want them to know"* (see Section 9.2.2.2 for the original of this quotation). The other three- Barbara, Liam and Manuel- received replies from other consumers, and were satisfied with the experience as they recognised their posts had been read and paid attention to.

Six of the participants who were expecting redress or solution to their problems were satisfied- Dave, Nolan, Audrey, Caroline, Hannah and Katie-, because the companies solved their problems. Additionally, Flor was satisfied because she received compensation although the company was not able to solve her problem.

Five of the participants- Matt, Melinda, Sedat, Kate and Amy- stated that they were satisfied, as they could vent negative feelings. Although some of them expected additional outcomes (e.g. Sedat's hopes of getting suggestions from friends), they explained that posting on Facebook itself was a useful method to vent, and enough to make them feel better about the situation. One of them, Kate, explained that although she was not satisfied with the company response because it was *'patronising and creeping'*, she was satisfied with her complaint in general, because to be able to vent had helped her.

Two of the participants- Emre and Selin- both received replies from their friends, and were content and satisfied about these. The replies Emre received were humorous similar to his complaint, and Selin's friends gave her suggestions which she had specifically asked for.

The remaining two participants- Mark and Netje- were satisfied as well due to personal reasons. Netje explained that she was happy to see that her friends agreed with and supported her. She believed such responses made the situation better and helped her to relax. Similarly, Mark explained that he was satisfied because his complaint on Facebook provided feelings of accomplishment:

Mark: “...[the outcome depends on finding] satisfaction for having accomplish something on the website. So whenever you accomplish something on the website, so you feel slightly level of satisfaction inside. So Facebook is really no different. They... they kindda constructed those boxes and, and... the posts all that stuff erm, in a way to give you satisfaction for having an accomplishment...”

Mark believed the design and the display of Facebook were factors that have influence on satisfaction on the website. He explained that these provide users the feeling of accomplishment whenever they create a post. When he posted his complaint, he had the same kind of feelings which actually made him feel better.

On the other hand, 11 of the participants were not satisfied with the outcome of their complaining activities on Facebook. Four of these participants- Megan, Addison, Donna and Jessica- were not satisfied because they did not receive any reply. Three of them complained to seek redress and Donna aimed to help the company by advising them how to improve one of their products. Since all of these four participants were expecting a direct reply from the company, they were not happy with the outcome.

Three participants- Olivia who was trying to raise awareness, Paul who wanted to criticise the company, and Lilly who needed help with her Internet connection- actually received replies from the companies, but they did not believe these replies were satisfactory, so they were not content with the outcome in general:

Olivia: *"I am not satisfied with the response because I felt as though Nestle should value human life over profit.../...I don't see why Nestle has to ask the gov't permission to do something as simple as that. No gov't can force a company to contract with their people."*

Olivia had a direct reply from Nestlé on Facebook. She stated that she was glad that they had paid attention to her concerns, but still she did not find the answer satisfactory. She believed the company's answer covered the issue only from a particular point of view, and did not answer her specific queries. Paul had similar ideas to Olivia, he suggested that the reply was from an employee who typed it as part of their duty, and he found this sort of reply insincere and dissatisfactory. On the other hand, Lilly believed that the company's reply was not satisfactory because it did not offer a solution to her problem.

Similarly, three participants who complained on Facebook to vent- Ayse, Derin and Tugba- stated that posting on Facebook was not enough to vent their feelings. They hoped to receive replies that might turn into conversations with friends. The lack of conversations left them dissatisfied because they could not vent. On a similar note, Berna was also not satisfied: although she received replies from friends, she did not believe the content of these replies were helpful:

Berna: *"I didn't receive the responses I expected, not the responses, not the interest, not the curiosity such as 'aw what happened to your camera' not the curiosity, not the comments errm not the help"*

Berna's post received 11 replies from four separate friends, but the content of these replies did not coincide with her expectations. She believed that if she had received replies asking for details of the problem or giving her advice on the matter, it might have helped her to feel better and satisfied with the complaint.

9.6. Conclusion

This chapter addressed the findings of the second stage of data collection. Findings suggested that objectives when complaining on Facebook vary from solely personal benefits (e.g. refunds, vent) to completely public concerns (e.g. changing policies of companies, raising awareness). Organisational, situational and technological factors influencing CCB on Facebook were explored as well. It is observed that these factors influenced complaining on Facebook in varying intensities. In terms of the findings with respect to the stages in the complaint process, participants used Facebook in four stages: ‘first -and only complaining’, ‘fall-back complaining’, ‘simultaneous complaining’, and ‘final complaining’. While complaining at different stages show some similar characteristics, some distinct features were also identified such as complaining on official pages as a fall-back channel. Finally, the anticipated outcomes and the actual outcomes of complaining activities on Facebook were discussed. Overall, 26 of 37 participants were satisfied due to variety of reasons such as being able to vent, finding a solution and having conversations with friends. However, eleven of the participants were not satisfied because of the lack of the responses, and insufficient or unsatisfactory content of the replies.

The next chapter will present and discuss the analysis of research findings from Chapters 8 and 9.

CHAPTER 10- DISCUSSION

“The concept of responding to customer unhappiness is not new and not new on the web. The difference with social media is the ‘speed’ and ‘ease’ in which this occurs as well as the sphere of influence.”

Erik Qualman, Socialnomics (2012)

10.1. Introduction

The aim of this study is to explore online CCB on Facebook, and to develop insights into the nature of complaining behaviour on this channel. An exploratory multi-method research design was developed to investigate actual behaviours on Facebook (Chapter 7). Chapters 8 and 9 reported the research findings, and this chapter provides an analysis and discussion of the key findings, delivering an interpretation of the research findings and literature review.

This chapter discusses the research findings in terms of their contribution to the understanding of CCB on Facebook. Section 10.2 focuses on online complaining actions, and develops a model to outline the typology of complaining actions on Facebook. Section 10.3 discusses the role of Facebook in the complaint process by exploring the use of this platform in relation to other complaining activities. Section 10.4 then considers reasons for and factors influencing complaining on Facebook. Finally, Section 10.5 reflects on consumers’ objectives when they complain on Facebook.

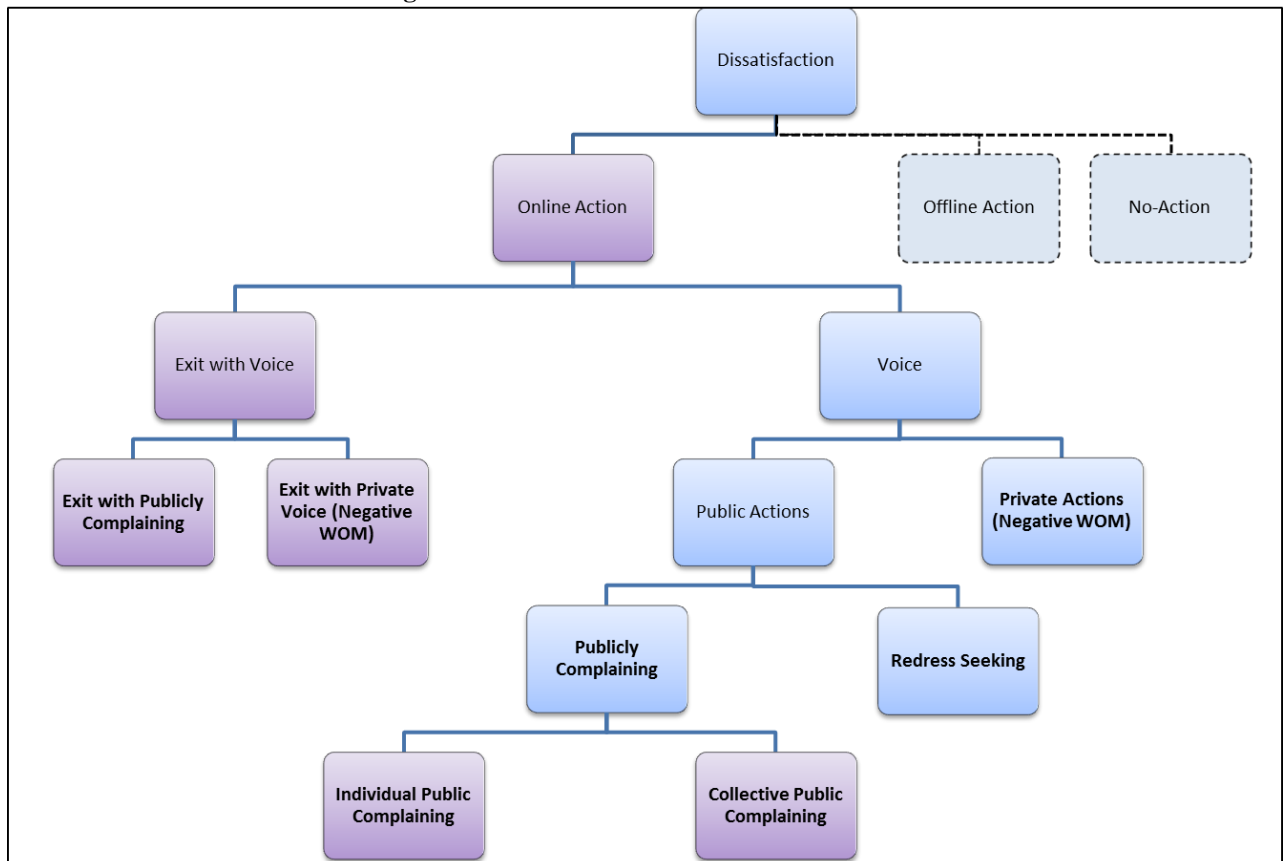
10.2. Model of CCB on Facebook

Tripp and Gregoire (2011:38) explain that, “online public complaining does happen every day in diverse forms and varying intensities”, and that is particularly the case for Facebook. Various sections and features of Facebook help consumers to shape their complaining activities in diverse forms. Consumers use areas of Facebook to voice their complaints to different audiences: they complain on their profiles, which may be limited to their Facebook

friends; they use official company pages to start or join discussions with the company itself or other consumers; they join unofficial groups about companies to post their complaints or comment on others' posts; and they create groups to talk about specific topics (see Chapters 8 for details). This section aims to develop a model to explain the variety of online complaining actions on Facebook using the Integrated Model of CCB (Figure 3.3) and the findings of this study.

The Integrated Model of CCB presents an offline typology of complaining behaviour. The structuring of complaining actions in this model is based on the characteristics of the activities (e.g. visibility of the action: public/private actions), and customers' decisions (e.g. preferring behavioural/non-behavioural response). The model suggests that dissatisfied consumers engage in five distinct offline actions: 'no-action', 'exit', 'negative WOM', 'publicly complaining' and 'redress seeking'. The present study shows that consumers perform three of these traditional complaining actions directly on Facebook: negative WOM, publicly complaining, and redress seeking. However, the Integrated Model of CCB is not enough to fully explain the extent of online CCB on Facebook. Hence, this study develops a 'Model of CCB on Facebook' to explain these (Figure 10.1). The main differences between the Integrated Model of CCB and the Model of CCB on Facebook are indicated by the colour purple.

Figure 10. 1- Model of CCB on Facebook



The Model of CCB on Facebook was developed using the structure of the Integrated Model of CCB. The first level of distinction, that of ‘action/no-action’, was expanded by adding the option of ‘online action’. Here, online action signifies consumers’ engagement in online complaining activities on Facebook. According to this, consumers now have three options: ‘no-action’, ‘offline action’ and ‘online action’. When dissatisfied, consumers can take offline action by voicing their disappointment or simply exiting the company, as described in the Integrated Model of CCB (i.e. second level of distinction: voice and exit). However, when they complain on Facebook, this action always consists of voicing complaints. Therefore, the second level of distinction in the Model of CCB on Facebook separates complaining activities by the existence of exit: only ‘voice’ and ‘exit with voice’. Similar to the Integrated Model of CCB, the visibility of the complaining action to the company (i.e. public or private) (Day and

Landon, 1977) is the next level of separation. 'Exit with voice' is divided into 'exit with publicly complaining' and 'exit with negative WOM'. 'Exit with publicly complaining' defines activities when consumers exit and complain in a way that is identifiable by the company. 'Exit with negative WOM' refers to activities when consumers exit and complain to their friends and family privately on their profiles. Following the same distinction, 'voice' was also divided into two: public and private actions. Like the Integrated Model of CCB, while there is only one type of private voice which is negative WOM, there are two types of public voice. These are 'publicly complaining' and 'redress seeking', which are the online versions of the traditional 'publicly complaining' and 'redress seeking'. Additionally, on Facebook, 'publicly complaining' activities can be divided into two: 'individually' or 'collectively'.

Below the main differences between the Integrated Model of CCB and the Model of CCB on Facebook are discussed.

10.2.1. Online Action on Facebook

The main difference in the Model of CCB on Facebook is the option of online action. It is known that the decision between 'no-action' and action is based on the requirement of resources (e.g. Voorhees et al., 2006). If the consumer's assessment of the total cost of complaining (i.e. the sum of the monetary and psychological costs including time and effort) is larger than the benefits of complaining, they prefer not to take action (e.g. Best and Andreasen, 1977; Richins and Verhage, 1985). Furthermore, ease and low cost of complaining increases the likelihood of action (Day and Landon, 1977; Cri , 2003). Similarly, perceived ease of the complaining channel (i.e. quick, convenient, accessible and simple) is found to be strongly associated with channel choice (Robertson, 2012). Interviewees repeatedly mentioned that ease, convenience, and cheapness were the main reasons for

complaining on Facebook. It seems that the low cost and effort of complaining on Facebook encourages consumers who originally would not complain to do so on Facebook, resulting in less ‘no-action’, and more complaining.

The outcome for companies of such consumer complaining is twofold. Companies can learn about problems that might otherwise have gone undetected, which should provide useful consumer insights and opportunities to solve problems. However, the fact that most of these complaints are visible to the public, they might also harm the company. Online complaints can lead to the diffusion of negative information quickly among consumers. Hence, it increases consumers’ power in the customer-business relationship (Pitt et al., 2002), and requires companies to develop strategies on how to deal with online CCB.

10.2.2. Exit with Voice

Some consumers who exit or intend to exit mentioned this in their complaints on Facebook. Since this type of CCB involves both leaving the company and voicing the complaints, it is termed ‘exit with voice’.

Exit is known as one of the most damaging complaining actions. Since the consumer abandons the company and does not provide feedback, companies do not know the reasons for consumer dissatisfaction and will continue to lose customers (Hirschman, 1970; Day et al., 1981). However, ‘exit with voice’ on Facebook provides some information on consumers’ exit behaviours. The benefits of this information are twofold: (1) companies will get feedback about problems and might use this information to solve those problems, and (2) they can learn who the leaving customers are. This helps companies by providing a means to communicate with leaving consumers to answer their complaints, attend to the issue to provide a solution and possibly reverse the exit decision (e.g. Dekay, 2012; Mattila et al., 2013). However, it is

also important to note that this study also showed that the company response on Facebook does not always guarantee favourable outcomes and induce consumers to stay (see Sections 8.6.2 and 9.5.2).

Nevertheless, it should be noted that mention of exit on Facebook does not always indicate actual exit behaviour: some of these consumers might not really exit, or exit only for a while. While some consumers might mention exit in order to share this information, others might have different motives, such as threatening the company. Moreover, other consumers who have exited from the company might not have mentioned this in their posts. Interviews with the research participants supported the concept of mention of exit not providing real information on exit. For example, Selin's post announced that she was leaving her current mobile service provider and asked for information on other companies. During the interview, she confessed that she reluctantly decided to continue with the same company, because she could not find a better contract deal.

10.2.3. Two Forms of Publicly Complaining on Facebook

Offline 'publicly complaining' happens in two ways: 'publicly complaining' directed to the company and 'publicly complaining' directed to third-parties (Singh, 1988). The latter includes complaints to the media, legal institutions and consumer organisations. While in some of these alternatives, such as media, complaints would be visible to other consumers, in some others, such as legal actions, they might not be publicly visible. However, on Facebook all 'publicly complaining' activities are publicly visible. This study also shows that there are two forms of 'publicly complaining' on Facebook. These are 'individual public complaining' and 'collective public complaining'. Individual public complaining activities are consumers' personal complaints that they voice publicly on Facebook. Collective complaining actions are those that aim to create a change with the help of other consumers jointly on Facebook.

Some of the participants who used Facebook for *individual public complaining* explained that they did not believe that Facebook could be used collectively. These participants believed that well-developed business plans and campaigns are required in order to convince companies to make changes, and that personal efforts would not be enough to cause such changes. For these participants, Facebook is a tool that can only be used for personal objectives. When they use Facebook, they take advantage of online complaining, but do not engage in collective complaining with others. However, participants who use Facebook for *collective public complaining* believe that Facebook can empower consumers by raising awareness and sharing information. Their complaints usually either call on others to boycott the company, or call on the company to change existing practices. Their main motivation is to reach as many people as possible. They believe that if they act collectively with others, they can make a significant impact on companies and force them to change. As an example, Charlie, who complained about Nike, explained that his main aim was to raise awareness and inform others about the situation of factories. He believed that creating a positive change in the Nike factories would only be possible by convincing enough people to complain about this issue:

Charlie: *“the best way to affect the companies is about their pocket, if you get people stop buying their product, or stop endorsing behaviour, I think that would be the best way to change things, as long as people are silent, I don’t think the companies will change or care unless you start affecting their cash flow.”*

Participants who engaged in boycott activities on Facebook had three main objectives: (1) to communicate with each other, (2) to communicate with the company, and (3) to raise awareness by publicising their reasons for boycotting to others. When they communicated with each other, usually on boycott-related anti-brand pages, they did not acknowledge these as complaining activities, but as another way of sharing news and information with each other

(see Section 8.2.1.4). However, these activities still create negative information about companies on Facebook and effectively serve as online CCB.

Compared to traditional activities of this sort, the main difference of collective public complaining on Facebook is the communication medium. On Facebook it is easier to reach more people. As Klein et al. (2004) noted, consumers are more likely to join collective activities and boycotts when they believe that others are also participating. Since complaining activities on Facebook are easily visible to others, it encourages them to join these activities when they notice their friends' and others' complaining. Therefore, these activities on Facebook spread faster than through traditional methods. Companies should be aware of this potential of Facebook, and monitor such activities. Therefore, developing mechanisms to answer such complaints quickly and showing intention to respond to the problems might also help to prevent these activities spreading further.

10.2.4. Redress Seeking on Facebook

Some consumers believe that Facebook cannot be used for redress seeking, but others believe it can. In the dataset, 'redress seeking' is the third most common objective after venting and criticism. These posts mostly contain detailed explanations. Some consumers even add photos of the defective products as a way to prove their case.¹¹ Analysis showed that Facebook can be used for immediate redress seeking activities right after the dissatisfaction, or as a fall-back channel to redress seeking.

Consumers who use Facebook for *immediate redress seeking* believed that Facebook is the fastest and easiest way to reach the company and obtain redress. In these cases, consumers contacted the company on Facebook, and did not anticipate engaging in any other offline or

¹¹ Permission to use these photographs could not been obtained from the post owners, and are therefore not included.

online complaining activity. As redress, they usually did not aim to obtain a physical product or repair, but instead sought a solution to their problem or a refund:

“I lose my wifi connection everyday around 6-10, I assume this is the prime time and your infrastructure is not enough to provide proper service to all. I think you need to solve this problem or I’m entitled for a refund” (Sky)

For the consumers who engaged in *fall-back redress seeking*, Facebook was not the first and primary channel to seek redress. After having failed using their primary redress seeking activities, they fall-back on Facebook. These consumers are victims of double deviation, and use Facebook as a fall-back complaining method (see Section 9.4.2).

Mattila and Wirtz (2004) explain that when consumers aim to obtain redress, they prefer interactive communication channels that provide real-time interaction. The findings of the present study show that consumers use Facebook for redress seeking, using what Mattila and Wirtz would describe as a remote and written communication channel. However, as perceptions of the Internet and Facebook are changing, computer-mediated communication channels are not regarded as remote channels any more. Rather the Internet is seen as a convenient and central aspect of everyday life (Ofcom, 2013). Moreover, companies can now actually offer interactive communications on Facebook. As a result, Facebook is gradually becoming regarded as an interactive channel with real-time access, rather than a remote communication channel. This increases consumers seeking redress on Facebook, and gradually it seems likely that more consumers will consider Facebook as their first channel to complain rather than a fall-back channel. Companies who value customer relations should take part in Facebook and be open to communication with consumers on this platform.

10.2.5. Multiple Objectives of Facebook Complaints

Past research on CCB regarded complaining actions as separate and independent actions (Day and Landon, 1977; Singh, 1988). If consumers want to engage in multiple complaining actions offline, these would be separate activities. For example, a consumer can call customer services to ask for a refund, and additionally can share her experience with friends, creating negative WOM. However, on Facebook, consumers do not need to engage in separate complaining activities in order to accomplish more than one task. Posts on Facebook contain aspects of multiple complaining actions. Consumers can complain with a post on an official page to publicly complain and seek redress simultaneously. Moreover, since Facebook friends are notified about all public actions on Facebook, public posts also carry characteristics of negative WOM. Therefore, on Facebook, consumers can satisfy different aspects of multiple complaining actions with only one post. This is not always easy to achieve with offline complaining and can be regarded as one of the major differences between offline CCB and CCB on Facebook. As a result, complaining becomes easier and less time consuming. The following subsections discuss two of the main implications of this: ‘redress seeking with publicly complaining’ and ‘publicly complaining with negative WOM’.

10.2.5.1. Redress Seeking with Publicly Complaining

When consumers seek redress through offline complaining methods (e.g. directly via the company), these complaints usually remain between the consumer and the company. Unless consumers want to publicise their problem and complaint through third-parties, these are not visible to others. However, on Facebook, all redress seeking activities are visible to the public. As an example, one of the participants, Dave, complained on Sky’s official page. His aim was to contact the company in order to solve his problem. He did not expect any publicity or involvement from other consumers. However, his complaint received comments from other

consumers. As discussed in Section 9.2.1, some consumers wanted to take advantage of the visibility of their redress seeking activities. For instance, Hannah believed that the possibility of other customers' involvement encourages companies to improve their customer services on Facebook. Moreover, when redress seeking activities are public, they offer additional benefits along with the redress. For example, Megan noted that even if her primary objective was to obtain redress, on Facebook she could simultaneously warn others.

Combining redress seeking and publicly complaining on Facebook has two major outcomes. First, now that all CCB on Facebook is public, companies cannot prevent negative information from spreading. Hence, they should not ignore consumers' complaints. Second, companies can also use Facebook to access information. Since all of the complaints are also visible to the companies, they can follow consumer discussions on Facebook for market research purposes.

10.2.5.2. Publicly Complaining with Negative WOM

Thanks to Facebook, it is now possible to communicate with multiple audiences with one complaint in a way that was not possible before. Depending on the objectives of the complaint, these audiences may include the company, other consumers and Facebook friends of the user. For example, Liam and Mark complained on public pages with objectives which included sharing information with friends. As they knew that Facebook would notify their friends about their public activities, they preferred to complain in this way, rather than engaging in separate activities. This aspect of Facebook helps consumers by decreasing the cost of complaining, easing the process and expanding the reach of the complaints.

10.2.6. Anti-brand Pages as Anti-brand Communities

Online anti-brand communities are non-geographically bound and are based on a structured set of social relationships that oppose a brand or corporation (Hollenbeck and Zinkhan, 2006). It was known that consumers create anti-brand web sites to form anti-brand communities (Bailey, 2004; Krishnamurthy and Kucuk, 2009). This study shows that some anti-brand pages on Facebook also serve like anti-brand communities. Hollenbeck and Zinkhan (2006) explained four reasons for forming online anti-brand communities: ‘common moral obligations’, ‘support networks’, ‘workplace challenges’ and ‘resource hubs’. In four of the anti-brand pages in the sample (i.e. ‘Boycott Nestle’, ‘I hate Apple’, ‘Boycott Nike for signing Michael Vick’ and ‘Can we find 1 million people who will never use Vodafone (again)?’) ‘common moral obligations’, ‘support networks’, and ‘resource hubs’ were identified. The members of these pages share common moral obligations on matters of right and wrong regarding the actions of the companies and worldview of how a company should function. These pages also create support networks for the consumers who have common goals. Consumers form social relationships with each other and use these relationships to exchange ideas, advice and support. In this way, they can guide each other in accomplishing their common goals. Finally, these pages work as resource hubs to inform other members and reach the public. Members use these Facebook pages to share text, photos, videos and other material to provide resources that would help other members to get involved or educate others.

10.3. Stages in the Complaint Process

As consumers have a variety of objectives in using Facebook, they may use it at different stages of their complaint process. Section 9.4 presented the use of Facebook at four stages of consumers’ complaint process: ‘first or only complaining’, ‘fall-back complaining’,

‘simultaneous complaining’, and ‘final complaining’. This section discusses the findings regarding the use of Facebook in relation to these stages.

Common uses of *first or only complaining* on Facebook are for venting, immediate redress seeking, and information sharing. In these cases, depending on the rest of the complaint process, Facebook might be the only complaining channel or might supplement traditional complaining. Another use of first or only complaining on Facebook is when consumers believe that they do not have another way to complain about that particular issue. In this case, Facebook seems to overcome the deficiencies and drawbacks of traditional complaining, and became the main complaining channel. *Fall-back complaining* is only used for redress seeking. These consumers complain to the company through other methods to no avail, and want to try Facebook as an alternative complaining channel. *Simultaneous complaining* is CCB on Facebook that occurs concurrently with offline complaining. These consumers engage in multiple complaining activities to share information, notify others or support a boycott. *Final complaining* happens when consumers complain on Facebook at the end of their complaint process. For some consumers this works as a last resort to seek a solution or obtain redress. For others, Facebook is a way to share information or vent after complaining through other channels. In these cases, Facebook is a supplementary complaining channel and used for reasons other than problem solving. The next subsection discusses the role of Facebook in the complaint process.

10.3.1. Role of Facebook: Supplement, Substitute and Last Resort

It was known that offline negative WOM communications are supplementary to offline complaints directed to companies, rather than replacing them (Halstead, 2002). This research shows that while some complaints on Facebook are supplementary, others substitute offline complaining activities, and sometimes it is a last resort, which is used only after other

complaining activities fail to help. The role of Facebook in the complaint process depends on factors such as the consumers' objectives, success of the previous attempts and consumers' perceptions of Facebook. Knowing that consumers assign different roles to Facebook can help companies in designing their responses in terms of ensuring that they have appropriate offline and online mechanisms to deal with consumers at different levels of their complaint process.

10.4. Factors Influencing CCB on Facebook

Cri  (2003:65) notes that "CCB is not an instantaneous phenomenon, it is the outcome of a process of preliminary evaluations under the influence of initiating and modulating factors". Consumers' decisions about how they complain are shaped by various factors. Complaining on Facebook is also an outcome of the influence of multiple factors. This study explored the factors influencing CCB on Facebook in three categories: organisational, situational and technological factors (Chapter 4 and Section 5.4). Based on the research findings, this section discusses the effects of these factors on CCB on Facebook.

Organisational factors: When consumers perceive the company as having low *responsiveness*, they are reluctant to voice their complaint to the company offline (e.g. Voorhees et al., 2006). Wu (2012) found that the same relationship existed for online businesses: positive perceptions about the responsiveness of online businesses increase consumers' intentions to complain online. By contrast, low responsiveness is found to increase offline negative WOM (Richins, 1983; Bolting, 1989). Similar to the suggestions of previous research, when interviewees believed the company was less responsive in general, they preferred Facebook as a means to communicate with others instead of the company. However, when interviewees perceived the company as highly responsive, they again used Facebook, but this time to reach the company through its official page as a direct communication channel.

If consumers do not believe that the *likelihood of success* of their complaining is high, they either do not engage with offline complaining (i.e. no-action), or engage in offline negative WOM only (Blodgett et al., 1993; Blodgett and Anderson, 2000). Interviewees who did not anticipate a high likelihood of success complained on Facebook to communicate with their friends or other consumers. On the other hand, contrary to Andreassen and Streukens (2013) findings, participants who had positive perceptions about the likelihood of success also used Facebook, but they aimed to contact the companies. This might be because of the changing nature of online communication. As Facebook provides interactive communication channels, now consumers might regard Facebook as a method for seeking immediate redress.

Attribution theory states that when consumers decide how to respond to dissatisfaction, they act based on their perceptions of the problem's cause (Krishnan and Valle, 1979; Folkes, 1984). According to this, when they believe that the cause of the problem is the company itself, the likelihood of redress seeking and exit are high (Blodgett et al., 1995). Complaining on Facebook is similar to traditional complaining in this sense: participants explained that when they blame the company for their problems, they use Facebook to seek redress or to spread negative information so that others can learn about the situation. Since all of the interviewees blamed the company it is not known whether and how consumers complain on Facebook when they have internal attributions of blame.

Lastly, research in offline CCB suggests that *marketplace factors* affect complaining actions. For example, exit barriers, attractiveness of alternatives and degree of competition are found to have an influence on complaining (e.g. Maute and Forrester, 1993; Jones et al., 2007). The only discussion related to marketplace conditions during the interviews was the mention of lack of alternative products/services. Consumers who do not have alternatives complain on Facebook to substitute 'no-action' or offline 'negative WOM'. Moreover, Dekay (2012), who

identified distinct market-specific trends in company responses on Facebook, suggests that consumers who are aware of these trends might shape their CCB accordingly. Although interviewees did not directly mention any relationship between their complaining activities and such marketplace conditions, observations identified similar characteristics on the pages of companies from the same industries, supporting Dekay (2012).

Situational factors: *Level of dissatisfaction* and *severity of the problem* are found to be positively related with complaining actions, and negatively related with repurchase intentions, in both offline and online situations (Richins, 1983; Richins and Verhage, 1985; Maute and Forrester, 1993; Cho et al., 2002; Audrain-Pontevia and Balague, 2008). Some participants of this study also suffered from high levels of dissatisfaction. However, contrary to the CCB literature, which suggests that a low level of dissatisfaction and severity are associated with non-behavioural responses, interviews showed that some consumers actually complained on Facebook even when they had low levels of dissatisfaction. These participants replaced ‘no-action’ with complaining on Facebook.

Perceived *lack of justice* is known to influence offline CCB, as consumers want to get even with the company through obtaining redress, getting revenge, or exit (Blodgett et al., 1993; Blodgett et al., 1997). In particular, consumers’ perceptions around lack of distributive and interactional justice is known to decrease customer satisfaction (McCollough et al., 2000; Mattila, 2001) and intentions to complain in the future (Voorhees and Brady, 2005) while increasing offline exit and negative WOM (Blodgett et al., 1997). Perceptions about distributive and interactional justice were also found to affect online complaining activities (Wu, 2012). Similar influences were observed in the present study (see Section 9.3.2). Consumers use Facebook to bring them justice through disseminating information about

companies. However, on Facebook, perceived lack of procedural, distributive and interaction justice all seem to induce complaining.

Following previous research about the influence of *problem types* on offline complaining (e.g. Best and Andreasen, 1977; Levesque and McDougall, 1996), their influence on CCB on Facebook was also explored. Section 8.3 discussed problem types using observational data. Problems with ‘products and services’ were the most common reasons for complaining on Facebook. Especially, quality of the core product and service is one of the main areas that lead to online CCB on Facebook. Although the literature on offline CCB found that service failures lead to more complaining than product failures (Best and Andreasen, 1977; Day and Landon, 1977), this dataset includes more problems regarding products than services. Another noticeable finding was issues regarding customer services being the third most common reason for complaining on Facebook. Unlike Tripp and Gregoire (2011), who found that 96% of the consumers in their sample complained after a customer service failure, observations did not reveal such a high percentage for complaining about customer service failures in this study. Only 13.1% of the observed posts (98 out of 684) were about customer service problems, and complaining on Facebook was the first complaint of 35% of the interviewees (13 out of 37). Tripp and Gregoire (2011) investigated online CCB on feedback/complaint websites and focused only on what they called severe cases. It is possible that reasons for using these websites for online complaining might be different from reasons for using Facebook. However, it is also arguable that while posting on Facebook, some of the consumers might have focused on their initial problems instead of mentioning the subsequent problems with customer services. If that was the case, the actual percentage of customer service problems might be higher. Lastly, another noticeable point is that both offline and

online promotional campaigns increased complaints on Facebook (Dekay, 2012). This was also supported in the present study.

Technological factors: As the literature suggests (e.g. Harrison-Walker, 2001; Robertson, 2012; Andreassen and Streukens, 2013), channel characteristics are one of the most important factors influencing consumers' channel choice. Almost all of the interviewees mentioned *ease and convenience* as benefits of complaining on Facebook. *Design of Facebook* was also mentioned as an important factor, as some consumers believed that the design features of Facebook actually encourage users to share more. *Member size* of Facebook was also found to induce complaining on Facebook. Consumers who wanted to reach a lot of people repeatedly explained their reasons to choose Facebook as its ability to reach high numbers of people.

On the other hand, *novelty of Facebook* hinders some CCB on Facebook. The literature on offline CCB suggests that consumers' competency to cope with complexities and uncertainty might affect their decisions regarding complaining (Bearden and Teel, 1980). In the online complaining cases, this includes computer and Internet literacy (Cho et al., 2002). Therefore, consumers with limited computer and Facebook literacy might prefer traditional channels to complain. Additionally, lack of knowledge about the structure of Facebook might deter complaining activities on Facebook. For example, some participants mistook unofficial pages for official ones, or did not know about the existence of public pages.

Technological- and Facebook-related factors show that Facebook is also an active participant in the construction of the reality of consumers' behaviours and interactions on Facebook. As discussed in Chapter 2, the structure of Facebook has changed significantly since its early days. For example, early Facebook only allowed user profiles but now both profit-orientated and non-profit organisations can have an official Facebook presence. As a result, Facebook is

no longer only a social utility for university students; instead it is a commercial website based on a business model that depends on advertising and marketing of products and services. The changes in the structure, design and functionality of Facebook influence how consumers ascribe the role of Facebook to their actions. As Facebook itself can directly affect how people use Facebook, it actually plays an active role in the construction of meanings. Although consumers can create their content as they want to, they must do so within the framework of Facebook guidelines and rules. In this way, Facebook influences and shapes individuals' norms as well as the culture within the medium.

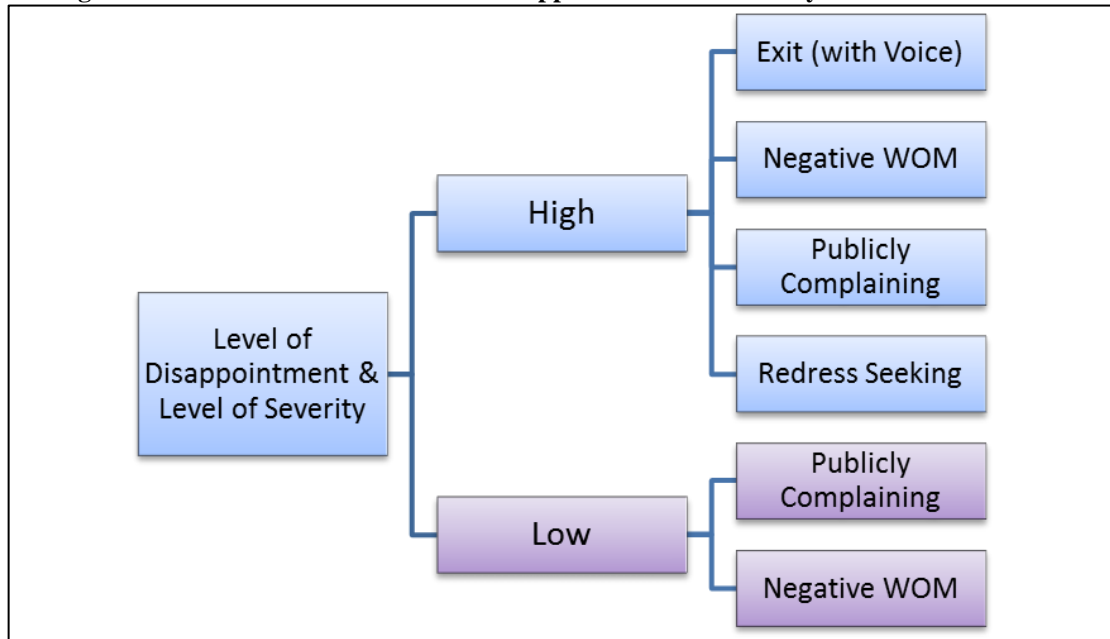
10.4.1. Differences in the Outcomes of the 'Factors Influencing Complaining'

Offline and on Facebook: Level of Dissatisfaction and Severity

This research demonstrated that the majority of organisational, situational and technological factors influence complaining on Facebook in similar ways to their influences on offline complaining. However, there are two instances where differences can be seen: the influence of the level of dissatisfaction and severity of the problem.

In traditional complaining cases, lack of these two factors is known to create the likelihood of no-action, but low levels of dissatisfaction and severity actually increase complaining on Facebook. Figure 10.2 shows complaining activities on Facebook with low and high levels of disappointment and severity. While high levels create the same complaining actions both in online and offline cases, on Facebook low levels create 'publicly complaining' and negative WOM, instead of no-action.

Figure 10. 2- Influence of the Level of Disappointment and Severity on CCB on Facebook



* Purple route shows the difference between offline complaining and complaining on Facebook

One of the reasons for this is the ease of Facebook, providing convenient communication channels. Consistent with the literature arguing that economic and psychological costs to complain in online environments are lower (e.g. Hong and Lee, 2005), all of the participants evaluated their cost of complaining on Facebook as either nothing, or only as the time that they spent. Previous research has suggested that consumers engage with complaints only when they perceive the total cost of their complaining to be less than their expected value of outcome (e.g. Best and Andreasen, 1977; Richins, 1982; Cho et al., 2002). Now that Facebook decreases the cost of complaining, it encourages consumers to complain even in cases of less severity and low disappointment.

10.5. Objectives of Complaining on Facebook

This section continues the discussion of why consumers complain on Facebook by focusing on consumers' objectives. This research shows that consumers have varied objectives to complain on Facebook, ranging from personal motives to public concerns (see Sections 8.5 and 9.2). Noteworthy aspects of these objectives are discussed below.

10.5.1. Objectives of Complaining to the Company on Facebook

Consumers' objectives in complaining to a company were summarised as: (1) making the business aware of the problem, (2) requesting compensation, and (3) making a change to solve problems (Stauss and Seidel, 2004). Although some consumers might also complain to help the company solve problems or improve the current state of practice because of loyalty (Hirschman, 1970; Halstead, 2002), such behaviours are not explored in detail in the recent literature. Researchers have mostly focused on objectives such as obtaining redress and venting, suggesting that these are the main objectives of offline CCB. However, this research shows that objectives such as 'advising the company' and 'improving the product/service' are amongst the objectives of complaining on Facebook. 10% of the perceived objectives in the dataset and 13% of the interviewees' objectives were driven by such motives. These consumers do not complain only because they have a complaint, but because they identify room for improvement. In a way, CCB evolves into a different form on Facebook as these complaints effectively work as constructive feedback. Companies can take advantage of this feedback, as they might cost less and reach the company faster compared to market research studies.

10.5.2. Objectives of NWOM on Facebook

After reviewing the literature on NWOM, Wetzer et al. (2007) listed consumers' objectives for negative WOM as 'comfort search', 'venting', 'advice search', 'bonding', entertaining', 'self-presentation', 'warning' and 'revenge'. Four of the six perceived objectives of negative WOM in this study (see Table 8.9) are represented in Wetzer et al.'s (2007) list, and the interviews revealed similar objectives (see Section 9.2.3) to Wetzer et al.'s (2007). In addition, this research identified two additional objectives ('making comparisons' and 'criticism')

through observations and two objectives ('updating Facebook' and 'information sharing') through interviews that were not in Wetzer et al.'s (2007) list.

This shows that similar objectives for negative WOM are present in online and offline channels. However, there are also objectives specific to negative WOM activities on Facebook. These are 'comparisons', 'criticism', 'updating Facebook', and 'information sharing'. These objectives essentially aim to exchange knowledge. It is known that Facebook profiles are commonly used for social interactions and interpersonal exchanges (Hampton et al., 2011; Carr et al., 2012). Also this study showed that the ability to reach all or most of one's friends and family through Facebook at once is considered as one of the key benefits of negative WOM on Facebook. Therefore, these four objectives of negative WOM on Facebook could be part of the social interactions and interpersonal exchanges with family and friends. In this way, consumers can inform their family and friends and help them to make purchase decisions. This would help consumers to obtain information more easily, even when they are not searching for it.

10.5.3. Psychological and Behavioural Objectives

This research found that some complaining activities on Facebook had objectives that were not directly related to the complaint itself, but rather had psychological or behavioural objectives. Some interviewees identified their objectives as 'connecting with friends' or 'updating Facebook', and others had self-presentation motives. This showed that some complaining activities on Facebook were essentially part of consumers' daily Facebook activities. It is known that some Facebook users regularly share and announce elements of their life to their friends on their profiles (Hampton et al., 2011). Since they share both positive and negative information, their complaints on Facebook are not different from the rest of their Facebook activities. As a result, complaining becomes normalised behaviour on

Facebook as a part of what consumers normally do on Facebook. Major themes are presented below.

10.5.3.1. Negative WOM via Community, Solidarity and Self-Enhancement

All participants who complained on profiles expected to receive replies from friends. Some of them openly asked questions or stated that they need help or suggestions (e.g. seeking advice or support), but others did not openly voice this need (e.g. venting). This research identified the psychological objectives of complaining activities on profiles as need for community, solidarity and self-enhancement, which are critical for the nature of communication.

Community: Some participants wanted to have conversations with friends. They considered this as a way of engaging with others, including chatting or joking. They believed that this would help them to forget about the negative situation, and vent negative feelings by experiencing feelings of community (see quotation from Ayse in Section 9.5.1.1). This reflects Köbler et al.'s (2010) findings that Facebook status updates create feelings of connectedness. Complaining on profiles helps consumers to strengthen their bonds with their community. However, it also contradicts Alexandrov et al. (2013) whose findings indicated that needs for social bonding have stronger effect on positive WOM than on negative WOM and that those who motivated to form social bonds were more likely to engage with positive WOM.

Solidarity: Some participants aimed to learn about others' similar experiences and exchange sympathy or empathy when they complained on Facebook. In this sense, complaining on Facebook helps them by providing a channel to build solidarity, potentially turning negative feelings into positive ones, and sometimes providing help. For example Derin explained this with simple terms:

Derin: <i>"I was happy to see that it was not like because I was an idiot"</i>
--

Solidarity might be an aspect of 'need for social comparisons'. Need for social comparison is defined as people's motives to compare themselves to others and is known to influence negative WOM communications (Alexandrov et al., 2013). Seeking solidarity on Facebook can satisfy this need for consumers.

Self-enhancement: Others simply expected to receive friends' feedback in the form of approval, support, agreement or attention. For these participants, receiving any feedback from friends provides psychological support, and self-enhancement. One participant, Mark, even claimed that friends' replies did not need to be in agreement to deliver self-enhancement. For him, even a dissenting opinion provides some level of affirmation. This means that his friends cared enough to reply to his Facebook posts, and also creates an opportunity to discuss the issue in more detail. Self-enhancement is known as a motivation to produce both online and offline positive WOM. Consumers engage in positive WOM activities to enhance how their image is perceived by others (Sundaram et al., 1998; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Although self-enhancement is known to affect mainly positive WOM, and not negative WOM in the literature until now (Alexandrov et al., 2013), this research found that on Facebook, negative WOM can also provide self-enhancement. Participants explained that after receiving feedback from friends, they felt better about themselves, because these conversations provided some degree of affirmation. Companies need to be aware that there may well be more negative WOM on Facebook, as it serves a positive function for consumers' self-enhancement.

Three psychological objectives of negative WOM on Facebook (i.e. community, solidarity and self-enhancement) carry similarities to objectives of offline negative WOM

communications. However, on Facebook, consumers have a broader field of people with the potential for more interaction and discussion. This has the potential for creating a greater range and impact on the feelings of community, solidarity and self-enhancement, and facilitates the ways in which consumers achieve their objectives.

10.5.3.2. Self-presentation

As presentation of Facebook profiles is believed to be part of expressing self (Krämer and Winter, 2008; Ong et al., 2011), for some consumers complaining activities are also part of the way in which they express their identity. They construct their complaints to serve what they believe would be best for their presentation of identity. For example, some of interviewees said they used humour and creativity, and others focused on the product or service to enhance their presentation over the actual complaint (e.g. the ownership of the latest technology or brands).

This also suggests that complaining activities are becoming part of Facebook norms. Consumers now complain not only because they have a complaint, but also because it is how they use Facebook. This normalises complaining activities and may create more complaining in the future. Companies need to take precautions against a potential increase in online complaining. They might need to allocate more resources to complaint handling. On the other hand, in most of these cases, complaints are not particularly designed to voice a problem. Therefore, companies might not need to worry about responding to each one of these complaints, which creates a potential paradox for the companies and needs to be further investigated.

10.6. Conclusion

This chapter has presented the discussion of key findings. The first section of the discussion focused on how consumers complain on Facebook. Using the Integrated Model of CCB (Figure 3.3), a model to explain online CCB on Facebook was developed (Figure 10.1). The Model of CCB on Facebook covers the variety of complaining activities: ‘exit with publicly complaining’, ‘exit with negative WOM’, ‘individual public complaining’, ‘collective public complaining’, ‘redress seeking’, and ‘negative WOM’. The chapter discussed differences between the Integrated Model of CCB and Model of CCB on Facebook. Among these, the ease and convenience of complaining on Facebook and ability to satisfy multiple objectives are the main differences. In the second section, stages in the complaint process and the role of Facebook were investigated. According to this, while some complaining activities are supplementary to offline complaining, others substitute these, or work as a last resort.

The rest of the chapter aimed to shed light on why consumers complain on Facebook. Firstly, factors that affect participants’ CCB on Facebook were discussed. The discussion was shaped around ‘organisational’ and ‘situational’ factors defined by the literature review on traditional CCB, and ‘technological and Facebook-related’ factors which were identified throughout this study. The interviews revealed that the influence of organisational and situational factors on CCB on Facebook is similar to that in traditional complaining. However, some exceptions were observed with two of the situational factors, level of dissatisfaction and severity of the problem. It is suggested that these differences might be due to the channel-specific characteristics of Facebook which decrease the total cost and effort to complain. Finally, the discussion about consumers’ objectives for CCB on Facebook showed that the majority of the objectives of offline and online complaining are similar, but some differences were observed. These include complaining to provide constructive feedback, and to express one’s identity.

This suggests that Facebook is also used for objectives different to offline complaining. Moreover, for some consumers, complaining is a way to use Facebook (e.g. communicating with friends), rather than complaining for the sake of complaints, and this normalises complaining behaviour on Facebook.

Based on the discussion presented in this chapter, Chapter 11 draws conclusions and identifies managerial implications of the research.

CHAPTER 11- CONCLUSIONS AND MANAGERIAL RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1. Introduction

This chapter concludes the research study undertaken by summarising the research findings, and presenting the research contributions. This study has explored consumers' online complaining behaviours on Facebook. Using an online ethnography, netnography, as the research methodology, online observations and in-depth interviews were conducted to collect data directly from consumers who complained on Facebook. In this way, the research aimed to understand and analyse consumers' actual behaviours and their own interpretations of these behaviours.

The chapter starts by summing up the research findings in Section 11.2. Then Section 11.3 presents the research contributions to the literature and to methodology. Implications of the study are presented with the focus on managerial recommendations in Section 11.4. Finally, Section 11.5 draws attention to the limitations of the study and Section 11.6 makes recommendations for future research.

11.2. Research Findings

After an investigation of offline and online CCB literature, this study provided detailed research findings through an exploratory design using two qualitative research methods that examined complaining activities on Facebook. The following subsections present the summary of these findings. Section 11.2.1 concentrates on how consumers complain on Facebook, and Section 11.2.2 focuses on why they complain on Facebook.

11.2.1. How do Consumers Complain on Facebook?

This study shows that consumer complaining on Facebook takes diverse forms. The structure of Facebook (in particular the various sections) provides flexibility for consumers to shape their complaining actions. Consumers have options to design the nature of their complaints, and determine the audience for these. Taking the Integrated Model of CCB (Figure 3.3) as the starting point so as to understand complaining in general, the findings were used to develop a model to explain online CCB on Facebook (Figure 10.1). This model shows the variety of complaining activities on Facebook by classifying them according to their aim and audience. As Figure 10.1 shows, CCB on Facebook can be categorised into six actions: ‘exit with publicly complaining’, ‘exit with negative WOM’, ‘individual public complaining’, ‘collective public complaining’, ‘redress seeking’, and ‘negative WOM’. The findings show that one of the major differences between offline CCB and CCB on Facebook is the ability to satisfy multiple objectives of offline complaints via complaining on Facebook. Even single complaints on Facebook can carry characteristics of multiple complaining activities. This allows consumers to target multiple groups of audiences, or to hold multiple objectives when complaining on Facebook (e.g. seeking redress and warning friends simultaneously with one post).

Understanding the stages of the complaint process at which consumers complain on Facebook is another one of the objectives of this study. The study defines the complaint process as one that starts with dissatisfaction and encompasses all of the activities in which consumers engage as a response to this dissatisfaction. The findings show that consumers use Facebook in four stages of their complaint process. These are ‘first or only complaining’, ‘fall-back complaining’, ‘simultaneous complaining’, and ‘final complaining’. This reveals that Facebook’s role in the complaint process could be different in each complaining case. While

some consumers complain only on Facebook, for others, Facebook is supplementary to other-offline or online- complaining activities. In some other cases Facebook is used as a last resort after other complaining activities fail to help.

11.2.2. Why do Consumers Complain on Facebook?

As multiple factors influence offline CCB, complaining on Facebook is also an outcome of multiple factors affecting consumers' decisions. Among these factors, organisational, situational and technological factors have been discussed in this study. The majority of organisational and situational factors influence complaining on Facebook in similar ways to how they influence offline complaining. For example, when consumers believed that the company was not likely to be responsive, they used Facebook as a means to communicate with others instead of the company, but if the company was perceived as highly responsive, they used Facebook as a direct communication channel to complain to the company. The main difference in terms of the influence of these factors is the effect of the level of dissatisfaction and severity of the problem. Consumers complain on Facebook even when they experience low levels of dissatisfaction and when they perceive the problem not be very severe. It is suggested that this could be an outcome of the low cost and effort of complaining on Facebook. The findings regarding technology- and Facebook-related factors (i.e. ease and convenience of using Facebook, novelty of computer-mediated communications, design of Facebook, and consumers' Facebook norms) were discussed as they too influence the variety of complaining activities on Facebook. While some of these factors have an effect on the use of channel (e.g. ease of use may induce complaining on Facebook), some others shape the nature of the complaining activity (e.g. using humour to express complaining as a Facebook norm).

The objectives of complaining on Facebook were also explored. The observations identified six objectives on public and profile pages with an additional two objectives on public pages that specifically aim to communicate with the company (Tables 8.7, 8.8 and 8.9). Additionally, the interviewees reported 28 objectives and revealed that consumers usually have more than one objective when they complain on Facebook. Most of these objectives were found to be similar to complaining offline. However, some objectives are unique to complaining on Facebook, suggesting greater opportunities than those found in offline complaining methods. These new ones include when consumers use Facebook to provide constructive feedback to companies or when they engage in conversation with friends without any concern or need to communicate with the company. Moreover, some complaining activities on Facebook are not driven by consumption-related objectives, but by psychological and behavioural objectives, such as seeking solidarity or self-presentation (see Section 10.5.3).

11.3. Research Contributions

This research has made several contributions to the understanding of online complaining behaviours. Subsections 11.3.1 and 11.3.2 discuss this study's theoretical and methodological contributions and subsection 11.3.3 introduces general contributions to marketing consumer behaviour.

11.3.1. Contributions to Literature

This research contributes to knowledge about online complaining by investigating actual online CCB on Facebook and consumers' own insights about these behaviours. By exploring this relatively newly occurring phenomenon, the study aimed to provide understanding on the

research topic, which had not been examined in this way before. The main theoretical contributions of this study are discussed below.

Development of the 'Integrated Model of CCB' and the 'Model of Online CCB'

One contribution of this study is the development of the Integrated Model of CCB and the Model of Online CCB (Figures 3.3 and 10.1). The CCB literature suffers from a lack of a widely accepted typology of consumer's complaining actions that differentiate complaining actions clearly. Hence, the Integrated Model of CCB was developed to answer this need. Using existing CCB frameworks, this model aims to explain the organisation of the variety of complaining actions. The seminal studies of Hirschman (1970), Landon and Day (1977), and Day et al. (1981) were used for this purpose. As a result, consumers' responses to dissatisfaction were categorised as five separate and distinctive actions: 'no-action', 'exit', 'private actions (i.e. negative WOM)', 'redress seeking', and 'publicly complaining'. These actions cover the range of complaining activities as consumers' responses to dissatisfaction. However, it is also acknowledged that consumers might engage in more than one action simultaneously or sequentially during their complaint process.

Although the Integrated Model of CCB can be used to explain online complaining activities, it does not fully illustrate the characteristics and extent of online complaining activities on Facebook. For example, consumers can use Facebook directly for redress seeking, negative WOM and 'publicly complaining'. However, posts regarding exit do not solely signify exit as an action since these consumers also use Facebook to voice their complaints. Therefore, such behaviours should be noted as a combination of exit and voice. In order to overcome such problems, this study also developed the Model of Online CCB to describe the range of complaining actions on Facebook.

Revealing Facebook Complaints with Multiple Objectives

As with offline complaining, consumers can engage in more than one particular complaining action on Facebook. However, on Facebook, they can also satisfy multiple objectives only with one complaining activity. The two main implications of this are ‘redress seeking with publicly complaining’ and ‘publicly complaining with negative WOM’. On Facebook, all redress seeking activities are also publicly complaining. Hence, redress seeking activities are not under the control of companies anymore: as this information can spread easily, companies cannot ignore complaining consumers. Also, all public activities are visible to Facebook friends, which merge ‘publicly complaining’ and negative WOM. Since consumers can communicate with multiple audiences with one complaint, Facebook decreases the cost of complaining and expands the reach of these complaints.

Revealing the Brand Communities and Anti-brand Communities on Facebook

As Facebook decreases the cost of communication and provides convenient tools to interact, consumers use this channel to form brand or anti-brand communities. Some might even assume that all user-created pages/groups on Facebook work like brand communities. However, this does not seem to be the case. While some Facebook pages and groups in this study carry characteristics of brand communities, others do not. Among 51 pages/groups in the sample, only seven function like brand or anti-brand communities (see Table 8.6). Consumers regularly using these pages consider themselves part of the community and share interpersonal bonds with the other members of the page. Moreover, one of these pages, Amazon Kindle, is an official page, suggesting that it is also possible for company-created and managed pages on Facebook to serve as brand communities. On the other hand, consumers using the remaining pages either do not interact with each other but engage in

conversations with the company, or they communicate with each other without sharing common consciousness, rituals and morals responsibilities.

Identification of Facebook's Role in the Complaint Process

The four contribution of this study was the identification of Facebook's role in the complaint process. It is important to understand the stage of their complaint process at which consumers complain on Facebook in order to understand online CCB and design an appropriate company response. The four stages in the complaint process during which consumers complain on Facebook (i.e. 'first or only complaining', 'fall-back complaining', 'simultaneous complaining', and 'final complaining') showed that there is no one definite role for Facebook in consumers' complaint processes. Using this information, companies should shape their online customer services and complaint handling strategies according to the specific needs of customers. A centralised customer services approach that connects available complaining channels might help companies in this task. When this is not possible, companies should train employees to respond to Facebook posts, making sure that they consider the needs of consumers at different levels of their complaint process.

Understanding How Organisational, Situational and Technological Factors Influence Complaining on Facebook

Another contribution of this study is the understanding of the way organisational, situational and technological factors influence CCB on Facebook. Traditionally, it was known that organisational and situational factors affect CCB by decreasing or increasing the likelihood of particular complaining actions (Table 4.1). This research revealed that these factors influence complaining on Facebook in similar ways. The only exception is the influence of the level of dissatisfaction and severity of the problem. While high levels of these two factors create the

same complaining actions in both the online and offline cases, low levels create ‘publicly complaining’ and ‘negative WOM’ on Facebook, instead of ‘no-action’ (Figure 10.2). Additionally, this research identified the technological factors influencing online complaining on Facebook: the ease and convenience of using Facebook, the novelty of Facebook and the design and structure of Facebook. These show that channel-specific characteristics are also important elements in consumers’ decisions regarding complaining activities.

Identification of Consumers’ Objectives for Complaining on Facebook

This study contributed to knowledge by identifying consumers’ objectives for complaining on Facebook. In total 28 objectives were identified, some of which were similar to those of offline complaining activities (see Table 9.3). These include personal objectives such as redress seeking, venting and seeking help, and public concerns such as raising awareness, educating others and improving products and services. Additionally, this research identified new objectives for complaining that have not been commonly seen in the offline environments. These are ‘advising the company’, especially with the aim of creating improved products/services, ‘knowledge exchange’, and ‘psychological and behavioural’ objectives such as connecting with friends, seeking community and self-enhancement. The identification of these objectives of complaining on Facebook shows that although consumers use Facebook in the same way that they use other complaining channels, Facebook broadens the extent of consumer complaining with additional new objectives. This increases the overall amount of complaining, and companies need to be aware of the potential impact of these new objectives of complaining.

Identification of Complaining as Normalised Behaviour on Facebook

The findings revealed that CCB can become normalised behaviour on Facebook. Consumers complain on Facebook not only because they have a complaint, but also because they gradually accept these activities as standard and part of their everyday Facebook use. This research identified that in three cases complaining on Facebook was actually Facebook norm. The first case is when consumers aimed to build community, solidarity or self-enhancement through Facebook. These are consumers who use Facebook to fulfil their psychological needs when they face disappointments. The second case is complaining as a method of self-presentation. As with other Facebook activities, some consumers' complaints on Facebook aim to manage others' impressions of themselves. Third, when consumers' boycott-related behaviours were investigated, it was found that some of these consumers actually use Facebook to communicate with each other to discuss boycott-related topics including organising events, rather than communicating their complaint. Nevertheless, these activities still create negative information about companies, which is an important factor for such companies to consider in terms of whether and how they respond.

Although some of these behaviours carry similarities with offline negative WOM, consumers can reach a broader range of people on Facebook. More people increase the potential for more interaction and discussion, and this advances the spread of negative information about companies. On the one hand, considering the consequences of increased online complaining, companies should regard these as CCB and respond accordingly. On the other hand, since some of these activities are not essentially constructed as complaints, and consumers might not even be truly disappointed. Hence, the normalisation of CCB on Facebook increases the amount of complaining but in some cases mitigates the complaints. This creates a paradox for

companies. The potential of company responses to complaining as normalised behaviour should be further investigated.

Need of Change in Complaint Handling Perspectives

The use of Facebook for consumer complaining also shows that businesses need to adjust their perspectives on complaint handling. Since online complaints are public, handling customer complaints are not limited to customer services departments anymore. With the help of computer-mediated communications, even consumers with minor problems can reach the international public, engage in collective activities and/or damage reputation of the company. In the same way, other consumers can now view how companies handle others' online complaints. Consequently, online complaint handling should be considered an integral element of companies' public communication strategies. Therefore, companies need to adjust their online practices especially in the areas of complaint handling and public relations, and researchers need to enhance literature in these areas

"The Future of Complaining is Online"

Finally, this study acknowledges that the future of complaining is online. As a summary of the findings of this study, Facebook appears to encourage online complaining, sometimes due to its convenience, and sometimes by creating another channel to fall-back on. Additionally, some non-behavioural responses to dissatisfaction turn into complaining on Facebook, because it creates an alternative for consumers who do not want to, or cannot, complain through traditional complaining channels. Moreover, some of the consumers who leave or intend to leave companies now also voice this on Facebook. Therefore, some exit behaviours become 'exit with voice', which makes them visible to companies and other consumers. The increase in online CCB and its visibility enhance the need for company administration and

monitoring of complaining activities on Facebook. Companies need to understand that online CCB is an unavoidable challenge and should adjust their complaint handling strategies accordingly.

On a more positive note, online complaining might bring opportunities. As the literature review suggested, ‘no-action’ and ‘exit’ are two of the most damaging types of CCB, because traditionally in these cases consumers do not provide feedback about their dissatisfaction. Hence, companies cannot understand and solve the problems. Now, through Facebook, these consumers became complainers: companies can learn about them that they would not have been able to know. Since it is cheaper for companies to keep existing consumers satisfied than acquire new ones (Fornell and Wernerfelt, 1987), if they can respond to these consumers and solve their problems on Facebook, they can convert the increasing amount of online complaining to their advantage.

11.3.2. Methodological Contributions

This research adopted an online research methodology, netnography, to investigate the topic under study. Netnography is not a new method, but because of its adjustable and flexible methods, researchers can modify their research design according to the needs of a particular study. Thus, the design and implementation of each netnography might be different from others. It is anticipated that the design and selection of methods in this study contribute to knowledge and implementation of online research methods. The methodological contributions are (1) exploration of three online interviewing mediums, and (2) exploration of relationship bonding between participants and the researcher on SNSs.

In this study, online interviews were conducted with participants in three mediums. The decision to use particular interview mediums was based on the medium with which the

interviewee was most comfortable. Originally, interviewees were offered three options- text, audio, or video interviews. However, some requested email interviewing and none preferred audio-based interviews. Therefore, three types of medium- text, video and email- were used. Text- and video-based interviews are synchronous communication methods and emails are asynchronous. As a result, the transcripts showed variations in terms of the content and length. Email transcripts were the shortest in length, but these usually had detailed descriptions and well-formed sentences. James and Busher (2009) explain that this is because participants have the opportunity to think and construct their responses in their own time. Therefore, they can edit and rewrite where necessary. On the contrary, as Chen and Hinton (1999) note, in synchronous interviews, interviewees respond instantly, so these provide more spontaneity. This was also observed in the present study: participants wrote as if they were speaking during text-based interviews. Transcripts usually included typos, half sentences and grammatical errors. However, as Mann and Stewart (2000) suggest, these interviews might generate responses which are honest in nature because of their spontaneity. Providing the same level of spontaneity, transcripts of the video-based interviews were the longest in length and usually included even more grammar and sentence mistakes. These sometimes also contained irrelevant material, as some participants also switched to talking about other subjects during the interviews.

Overall, all three interviewing methods provided sufficient and valuable data but had some disadvantages. Emails and text-based interviews were restricted by the limitations of written communication. However, as they usually provided rich data with detailed descriptions, emails compensated for some of these problems and provided necessary information. Moreover, these two kinds of interview have the benefit of producing transcripts automatically (Mann and Stewart, 2000). On the other hand, synchronous interviews provided

more opportunity for probing and follow-up questions, so they were useful in terms of interacting with participants and generating personal data. However, these were more difficult to analyse, because of the complex and disordered content of the transcripts. To sum up, if researchers have the opportunity to select mediums for online interviews, this decision should involve careful consideration of the required data. If the research requires well-structured, carefully considered answers from interviewees, email interviews might produce better results than video-based interviews. If the research is based on interaction between the researcher and the participants, one of the synchronous methods should be preferred. Between text and video, text-based interviews are more useful with participants who are familiar with the computer-mediated communications and who can type fast, whereas video-based interviews offer the benefits of visual clues when such information is necessary.

The second methodological contribution of this study is the exploration of the relationship bonding between researchers and participants on SNSs. The literature has suggested that the difficulty of relationship bonding with online research participants might create problems in establishing rapport and trust (James and Busher, 2009). However, this research showed that SNSs offer opportunities to form relationships with the participants. Since the researcher shared a limited version of her Facebook profile with participants, they could view selected information about her. This information included educational background, photos taken on the university campus and at academic conferences, examples of CCB on Facebook and Twitter, and links to academic and professional institutions. It was observed that most participants browsed this information before the interview, and some also added her as a friend on Facebook. Furthermore, after the interviews, some participants sent follow-up messages about their complaints or information on their new complaints about recent dissatisfactory experiences. This shows that openly providing a combination of personal and

academic information can help to reassure participants about the authenticity of the researcher and the research project, and can help to establish rapport and trust between the researcher and participants. This can even contribute to a continuation of the research project over time.

11.3.3. Theoretical Contributions to Marketing and Consumer Behaviour

This study showed that with the advance of new technologies in computer-mediated communications including popular social media tools such as Facebook, there is a move in consumers' complaining activities from functional to experiential. It was known that consumer complaining activities include a variety of responses to dissatisfaction. Although researchers have used different classifications and typologies to analyse and organise these activities, past frameworks mainly focused on the functional aspect of complaining such as redress seeking, information sharing and expressing negative feelings (i.e. venting) (e.g. Day and Landon, 1977; Singh, 1988). For example Stauss and Seidel's (2004) investigation of objectives of complaints directed to the companies are listed as (1) making the company aware of the problem, (2) requesting compensation, and/or (3) making a change when there is a problem. Moreover, complaining activities were traditionally believed to carry psychological costs and/or to create unwanted social situations for consumers (e.g. Richins, 1980). On Facebook, on the other hand, it is observed that not all complaining activities are functional or negative. In some cases, complaining on Facebook could be a tool to socialise, a way to present one's self or a source of entertainment. As a result, perceptions on the nature of complaining are evolving. Venting, for example, was once known as negative and confrontational, but can now be recognised as social and fun. Similar to how Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) defined experiential aspects of consumption with consumers' fantasies, feelings and fun, now complaining also has experiential aspects which are more social, positive and fun. Such an expansion of complaining behaviour introduces new areas to

investigate concerning the role of entertainment in complaining activities, social dimensions of these, and the therapeutic effects of venting.

Another contribution of this study is about the change in the organisation of the spaces. Facebook and other social media tools did not only provide new channel to communicate, but they also shaped the way consumers and businesses communicate with each other. As online communication channels such as Facebook offer various tools for companies to interact with their consumers without constraints such as budget, time and geographical limitations, these can be used to reshape the way companies interact with their customers. Moreover, when SNSs were first introduced, they were perceived as informal communication channels with friends. Hence, when they were expanded as communication tools with companies and other organisations, it seems that some users preserved their perceptions and continued to use them in the same way. This influenced the way that they interact with businesses on these channels. Especially, for the companies in services industry, this introduces an opportunity to add value. Companies can design these spaces based on their brand image, consumers' expectations or requirements. One of the companies in the sample of this study, Vodafone, for example, uses their official Facebook page for informal, spontaneous and casual communication with their customers. Admins of this page use a friendly tone and include jokes and personal stories to their messages. As an another example, one of the P&G's official product pages, Pampers, was created as a space for customers to talk about not only the product but other topics related with babies. Admins of this page join the conversations about babies, and interact with their customers on the matters that are not related with the product or brand.

Finally, this study shows how Singh's (1988) taxonomy of traditional consumer complaining can be applied to Facebook and other online complaining channels. Singh (1988) uses the specific characteristics of the 'object' of the particular complaining action (e.g. family/friends,

third-parties) rather than the complaining activity itself. Using the characteristics of the objects (i.e. external/not external and involved/not involved), Singh (1988) categorises complaining responses into three actions: 'voice', 'third-party', and 'private' (See Table 3.2). According to this, each complaining activity such as negative WOM and redress seeking corresponds to one of these three actions types. For example, negative WOM is a type of private action and redress seeking is a voice response. However, online aspects of complaining behaviour and negative WOM changed the nature of these activities. One widely-used definition by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004:39) defines online negative WOM as "...negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet." As it can be seen in this definition, Internet broadens the extent of complaining activities (i.e. multitude of people) and the type of the receivers of the complaints (i.e. people and institutions). Hence, now both online CCB and nWOM can carry characteristics of all the three types of Singh's actions (i.e. involved/not involved and external/not external). As a consequence, it might seem like Singh's taxonomy is no longer relevant to online complaining. However, as we can see in this study, this taxonomy is still useful in terms of classifying the various online channels. By applying Singh's categorisation to Facebook, this study defined Facebook sections by their characteristics (i.e. involved/not involved and external/not external). According to this, complaining on profile pages matches with 'private responses', complaining on official pages matches with 'voice responses' and complaining on user-created pages matches with 'third-party responses' (See Table 5.2). Therefore, Singh's taxonomy is still appropriate to explain the translation of various Facebook sections and how consumers use these to complain. Although Singh's (1988) historic perspective shows consumer complaining and negative WOM in a limited form, availability of the various online

complaining channels essentially re-creates Singh's model. This model then can be used to explore the nature of CCB on different channels and platforms and to explain how people complain differently on these platforms.

11.4. Implications and Recommendations for Management

One of the major contributions of this study is to demonstrate that the future of complaining is online. Companies need to be aware of this and adjust and develop their complaint handling strategies accordingly. Although more research is needed to expand the understanding on the normalisation of complaining behaviours on Facebook in order to solve the paradox highlighted above and help companies with their strategies, this section makes recommendations to companies based on the findings of this study.

Sections 8.6 and 9.5 presented the findings about outcomes of CCB on Facebook. In the light of these discussions, managerial recommendations were given in two forms: (1) company strategies for online complaint handling, and (2) daily complaint handling practices.

11.4.1. Company Strategies for Online Complaint Handling on Facebook

Before companies start to interact with their consumers online, they must plan their online presence. This includes decisions regarding the (1) functionality of official pages, and (2) monitoring user-created communities.

Whilst some companies appear to prefer not to have a presence on Facebook, others have official pages and disable the discussion sections (i.e. timeline) to block consumers' posts. This might simulate a complaint-free Facebook presence provisionally. However, this study shows evidence that this might not be the best practice in most cases. As some consumers only need a place to vent and voice their complaints in order to feel better about the situation,

such pages can actually fulfil this need. Moreover, past research suggests that after engaging in complaining activities, consumer satisfaction increases and negative WOM decreases (Alicke et al., 1992; Nyer, 2000; Voorhees et al., 2006). Therefore, just by using Facebook to provide a channel to complain, companies might actually help to improve satisfaction levels and decrease negative WOM. Furthermore, some CCB on Facebook offers constructive feedback. Companies can take advantage of this in terms of the problems it highlights and the opportunities it offers for the improvements. However, since Facebook is a publicly visible communication channel, companies need to interact with consumers and respond to their complaints rather than leaving the page without active administrative monitoring. In this way, companies do not stay as an outside observer, but can participate alongside consumers. Such company interactions can help not only by providing prompt complaint handling techniques but also by strengthening customer bonding. When companies regularly interact on their official pages, they have an opportunity to participate with consumers' communications and form relationships. This study showed that these actually increase consumers' positive perceptions of company responsiveness and credibility. Also, since admins are able to delete posts containing spam and fraud, pages with active administrative monitoring are better managed in terms of their overall content. As a result, this creates a neat space that focuses only on the company and its consumers. This might encourage consumers to be active members on these pages in return. Therefore, those companies which hope to create online communities for their consumers should retain active administrative monitoring on their official pages.

Although official pages with a company presence hosted more interaction among consumers compared with other pages, companies should not ignore user-created pages/groups. Some of these have high numbers of members and can be used to spread negative information about

the company. When consumers mistake these pages for official ones, this could lead to even more dissatisfaction. In order to prevent these pages spreading negative information, companies need to highlight their official pages. In this way, they can gather both positive and negative information on their official pages, and respond to these. This would help them to save resources and to prevent multiple Facebook sections publicising negative information. However, highlighting official Facebook pages cannot guarantee that all consumers will use these: some consumers who want to communicate with others and raise awareness prefer to engage in ‘collective public complaining’ on user-created pages/groups to reach likeminded others. In a sense, some of these pages/groups are similar to anti-brand/complaint websites. They are created by consumers to facilitate negative consumer-to-consumer communications (Bailey, 2004). As with anti-brand websites, companies cannot delete these pages on Facebook. However, they can access and monitor user-created pages in order to understand their consumers, and respond to complaints from these pages on the company’s official Facebook page. Bailey’s (2004) survey about anti-brand websites showed that these consumers actually expected companies to respond to their complaints on their official websites. Given that Facebook pages carry similar characteristics to official websites, this method can be applied to Facebook. However, since Facebook is a huge online community, managers might have time and budget restrictions to consider. Therefore, this study suggests that they should monitor a selection of user-created pages, and communicate with consumers only when necessary. This selection should include pages from the following categories: unofficial brand and product pages, anti-brand pages and issue-specific pages. In order to decide which pages to monitor, managers could use Kozinets’ (2010) guidelines on site choice for netnography. According to this, Facebook pages that are relevant, active, interactive, substantial, heterogeneous and data-rich can be used (see Section 7.2.1.1.1). In

this way, they can focus on only the most relevant pages with a high number of members and interactions. Considering that Facebook is a dynamic channel, managers should update this selection of pages when certain pages become inactive and new ones emerge. Additionally, as Casarez (2002) suggests, maintaining a strong online presence is important as a response to CCB on anti-brand websites. Providing recent and accurate information on official Facebook pages can help companies to sustain a positive Facebook presence, increase their credibility and protect the company from likely damage by negative information.

11.4.2. Daily Complaint Handling Practices on Facebook

This subsection aims to help companies with their daily complaint handling practices on Facebook. Through the findings of this study, it is clear that there is not one solution that can be employed in every situation. Like Mattila's (2001) suggestion for offline service recovery situations, companies need to consider that consumers might have different expectations and needs when they train employees who interact with consumers online.

As Hart et al. (1990) suggest, correcting the source of the problem should be the main aim of companies. For this purpose, employees who have direct contact with consumers on Facebook should be empowered by providing them with knowledge and control to take action. Where appropriate, they should have authority to provide redress. In cases where page admins cannot solve the problems, directing the consumers to the appropriate department or communication channel still provides positive results. If that is also not possible, companies should show that they care about consumers' input but explain that they cannot provide a solution in this case. One of the most important aspects of every day complaint handling is consumers' perceptions of company responsiveness. The interviewees were satisfied as long as they felt that companies responded to their posts with willingness and honesty. This is consistent with research on offline customer service encounters. If employees take consumers' complaints seriously and

treat them respectfully, consumers believe that these complaints are likely to reach a solution, and customer satisfaction increases (Gruber et al., 2006; Gruber et al., 2008a; Gruber et al., 2011).

On the other hand, when consumers receive boilerplate answers and when they feel that the company ignores them, their dissatisfaction increases. Participants who wanted to communicate directly with the company always expected to receive a tailored response that answered the particular issue that they had raised. It was found that boilerplate answers or answering only some consumers' posts and ignoring others created dissatisfaction and negative impressions of the company. This finding corroborates previous research on complaint handling in offline and online environments (Clark et al., 1992; Smart and Martin, 1992; Mattila et al., 2013). As Bitner et al. (1990) note, employees' ability and showing willingness to solve service failures increase consumer satisfaction. Dekay (2012) suggests that ignoring online complaints might be regarded as lack of corporate concern for consumers' opinions. Similarly, when admins replied to all posts with tailored answers and tried to solve the problems, interviewees were content and appreciated the company's input.

However, there were some exceptions. When participants used Facebook as a supplement to their offline complaining (e.g. to raise awareness, spread information or educate others), they did not regard the company as a party in their complaining activities. For them, their complaining was between them and other consumers, and they did not even expect replies from official company pages. Similarly, for some participants complaining on Facebook is part of their Facebook norm without primarily intending to engage in CCB. In these cases, they were not concerned about unanswered posts or boilerplate answers. Nevertheless, if these participants received personalised replies from the companies that focused on their post,

suggesting that the company would take their opinions into consideration, they were satisfied, and had positive feelings about the company.

Both the observations and interviews suggested that when companies delete consumers' posts, consumers consider this as censorship. Moreover, some consumers continued to post on Facebook after their initial posts were deleted. These posts usually contained more severe wording and angrier tones. These posts can make other consumers realise that companies employ this practice, and might create more negative impressions about the company and its customer services. Hence, as social media practitioners have also suggested (Dekay, 2012), such practices should be avoided. However, there again are some exceptions: it was acceptable for companies to delete posts because of misuse and the ill manners of consumers such as swearing, insulting others or engaging in fraud or any other illegal behaviour. Companies should publish their regulations on their page's information section, and explain their reasons for deleting posts.

Finally, speed of response time was one of the factors mentioned as an important element when dealing with online complaining in the literature. If companies can react quickly and resolve problems in a timely manner, they might prevent consumers becoming more disappointed in both the online and offline environments. (Gilly and Gelb, 1982; Hart et al., 1990; Cho et al., 2002; Mattila and Mount, 2003; Tripp and Gregoire, 2011). However, interviewees did not mention this when they talked about company responses. Nevertheless, the researcher acknowledges the importance of a quick response, especially in collective public complaining cases.

11.5. Limitations

This section presents the limitations concerning this study. In addition to the methodological limitations that were discussed in Section 7.5, there are limitations related to: (1) the scope of the study, and (2) the Internet being a dynamic medium with constant changes.

The factors influencing online CCB were categorised as personal, organisational, situational, and technological. However, personal factors- consumer-specific characteristics such as demographics, personality, attitudes towards complaining, and culture- were not included in this study. The main reason for this was the capability of the methods employed in this research. In-depth interviews were not capable of measuring personality traits or attitudes towards complaining. Moreover, since the participants were only contacted through Facebook, the researcher decided not to ask any personal questions (e.g. demographics) considering that such an approach could decrease participation.

In the Integrated Model of CCB, the decision between ‘action’ and ‘no-action’ is the first choice of consumers who face a dissatisfactory situation. If consumers prefer a non-behavioural response, and continue to patronise despite dissatisfaction, this is defined as ‘no-action’. No-action is not easily observable. Some studies have explored this behaviour through the use of consumer surveys (e.g. Day and Landon, 1976) and interviews (Stephens and Gwinner, 1998). However identification of ‘no-action’ was not within the scope of this study. Hence, it used observations to examine online behaviours, and interviews with consumers who complained on Facebook. Consequently, no information was gathered about consumers who prefer no-action over complaining on Facebook.

Another limitation of this research is that the Internet is a dynamic medium undergoing constant changes. As Danet (2001) notes it is not easy to write about a dynamic medium in a

static one because of constant and unpredictable change. As an example, one important statistic about Facebook, number of active users, changes continuously, and it is difficult to keep track of such information in a static medium. For example, the back cover of Kirkpatrick's book 'Facebook effect' (2011) states that Facebook has over 500 million active users, while its prologue refers to over 400 million. Some of the changes which occurred during the life of this study include those in the design of news feed and profiles, deletion of some pages, alterations in the terms and conditions of Facebook usage, and messages from non-friends being delivered to a folder called others instead of the inbox (see Section 7.5). Hence, researchers who use online research methods should bear this limitation in mind and be flexible about modifying their methodologies to accommodate relevant changes.

11.6. Future Research

The aim of this research was to explore CCB on Facebook using an interpretative research methodology. The literature reviewed in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 propose that this research methodology is trustworthy. However, further research with larger sample sizes could be conducted to address issues regarding generalisations from the research. In the light of the research findings and the above limitations, there are also several opportunities for future research into online CCB. Some of these are listed below.

Future studies could explore consumers' online CCB on different types of pages/groups on Facebook in order to reinforce the understanding in this area. The current analysis showed that pages/groups often carry different characteristics in terms of usage, community culture, and relationships between members. For instance, official company pages and user-created pages can be compared to examine the differing complaining actions. Similarly, focusing on particular industries or product types might be helpful in understanding particular CCB and

generating specific managerial implications for those industries. Furthermore, different product/service types can be investigated to reveal the product/service types that lead to more complaining on Facebook.

Now that this research has explored the nature of CCB on Facebook, further studies could use this information and focus on companies' responses to online CCB on Facebook. They could follow company responses in a longitudinal study to explore how they react to consumer complaining compared to consumer expectations from companies. In this way, strategies for online complaint handling can be developed.

Although 'no-action' is considered to be a legitimate complaining action, directly observing this behaviour was not possible, hence was not part of this study. A research methodology to combine offline and online research methods can be designed to explore the possibility of a relationship between no-action and online complaining behaviours. Investigating such a relationship, if any, might aid in the understanding of how much no-action behaviour turns into online complaining activities.

More research needs to be undertaken to examine factors influencing CCB in more detail. Firstly, personal factors influencing CCB on Facebook should be examined using appropriate methodologies. Moreover, investigating organisational and situational factors through quantitative research methods would reveal more about the relationship between these factors and the use of Facebook. These might help to enhance the understanding of why consumers complain on Facebook.

One of the contributions of this research was the identification of CCB as a normalised behaviour on Facebook. Companies need to know how to differentiate complaining as a Facebook norm and actual complaining. Additionally, it is not clear what consumers expect

from companies in these situations: this creates a potential paradox for the companies in complaint handling situations. A study that investigates these behaviours and consumers' expectations in such cases can help companies to employ best practices.

Finally, as one of the competitors of Facebook, Twitter is increasing its member base. Researchers are already investigating consumer behaviour on Twitter for WOM behaviours (e.g. Jansen et al., 2009). This study also showed that consumers' use of Twitter to complain online is sometimes simultaneous with the use of Facebook, but may also be independent of Facebook. Exploring CCB on Twitter and potentially comparing this with CCB on Facebook would broaden understanding and provide insights into online complaining. Additionally, investigating how consumers use different social media tools to complement or reinforce each other in their complaining behaviour might help to enhance understanding in CCB on SNSs.

11.7. Conclusion

This thesis has explored consumers' complaining behaviours on Facebook, and provides conclusions and implications for CCB literature and practice. The research objectives were focused on understanding the use of Facebook as a medium for consumer complaining and why consumers complain on Facebook.

The key contribution of this study lies in its demonstration that Facebook increases complaining activities converting some of the no-action into online complaining and broadening exit with voice. Hence, companies need to learn how to manage the effects of online CCB, and to adjust their complaint handling strategies. Additionally, six contributions were drawn from this study: (1) development of the 'Integrated Model of CCB' and the 'Model of Online CCB', (2) revealing Facebook complaints with multiple objectives, (3) identification of Facebook's role in the complaint process, (4) understanding of how

organisational, situational and technological factors influence complaining on Facebook, (5) identification of consumers' objectives for complaining on Facebook, and (6) identification of complaining as a normalised behaviour on Facebook.

In light of the above contributions and the analysis of the outcomes from CCB on Facebook, research implications and recommendations for management were suggested. Since page admins cannot always help to fix the initial reasons for complaints, following these practices can help companies to keep their consumers satisfied. They include allowing consumer discussions on official pages, interacting with them on these pages, replying to all consumers' posts with tailored answers and being restrained in deleting consumers' posts; and above all, companies need to increase consumers' positive perceptions of company responsiveness. Additionally, it is suggested not to ignore user-created pages of Facebook, and to observe a selection of these pages as well.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 7.1 – RECRUITMENT MESSAGES

Recruitment Message for Interviews

Hello, I'm Doga Istanbuluoglu. Currently, I'm studying consumers' online complaining on Facebook as a part of my PhD in University of Birmingham/UK. You can find more information about this study on my Facebook profile page and in this link: (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/business/departments/marketing/news/2012/february/highlighted-profile-doga-istanbuluoglu.aspx>)

As a part of my study, I am observing the group/page of “<<*insert group/page name*>>”.

During my observations, I saw your post on this group/page dated <<*insert date*>>. Following this comment, I would like to have a chat with you about this and maybe your other online complaining activities. This chat can be form of text, video or audio (whichever you feel more comfortable).

If you are interested, please let me know, I will send you another email regarding the information about this study. If you have any further questions about this study then please contact me (dxi789@bham.ac.uk). You can withdraw your consent to be part of the study at any time you want.

Looking forward to your reply.

Best,

Doga Istanbuluoglu

University of Birmingham / Birmingham Business School

This research is conducted by the supervision of Prof. Isabelle Szmigin, Birmingham Business School, University House Birmingham, B15 2TT, Tel: +44 (0) 121 414 7357, Fax: +44 (0) 121 414 7791

Recruitment Message in order to use Quotations

Hello, I'm Doga Istanbuluoglu. Currently, I'm studying consumers' online complaining on Facebook as a part of my PhD in University of Birmingham/UK. You can find more information about this study on my Facebook profile page and in this link: (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/business/departments/marketing/news/2012/february/highlighted-profile-doga-istanbuluoglu.aspx>)

As a part of my study, I am observing the group/page of “<<*insert group/page name*>>”.

During my observations, I saw your post on this group/page dated <<*insert date*>>. This comment has a significant importance for my research and I would like to use it on my thesis.

If you give permission to use it your post will only be used for research purposes and presented in an aggregate form thereby not revealing any individual information. (e.g. pseudonym/fake name will be used instead of your real name)

If you are interested, please let me know, I will send you another email regarding information about this study. You can also ask whatever you want to me and if you wish you can quit at any time you want.

Looking forward to your reply.

Best,

Doga Istanbuluoglu

University of Birmingham / Birmingham Business School

This research is conducted by the supervision of Prof. Isabelle Szmigin, Birmingham Business School, University House Birmingham, B15 2TT, Tel: +44 (0) 121 414 7357, Fax: +44 (0) 121 414 7791

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/business/departments/marketing/news/2012/february/highlighted-profile-doga-istanbulluoglu.aspx>

APPENDIX 7.2 – CONSENT FORMS

Consent Form for Interviews

First of all, I would like to thank you for consenting to be part of this study. Here, you can find some information about the study.

Purpose: This research aims to investigate customer's online complaining behaviours on Facebook. I hope to learn more about the experiences of people who make online complaints on Facebook and to better understand the role of online interaction in those complaining activities. After the research is completed, the findings are going to be used in my dissertation for the degree of Ph.D. in Marketing in Birmingham Business School and also I hope to publish the study in an academic journal, and may present it at academic conferences. More detailed information about the study can be found on my profile page. The eventual aim is to enable companies to be able to effectively address consumers' online complaints.

Procedures: If you decide to be part of this study, your participation will involve;

- consenting to an interview to be conducted in person in the form of text-, video- or audio-form (whichever is your preference).
- that interview taking maximum one hour (average 30 minutes for video/audio 60 minutes for text interviews)
- focusing on your complaining activities
- in the case of audio and video chats, the session being audio taped and text chat being saved for future reference (unless you object to saving the conversations – in that case the researcher having notes from the conversation).

Risks: There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts involved in this study.

Confidentiality:

To protect your confidentiality, your name will not appear in any published material. You will be assigned a pseudonym (a fake name) that will be used instead of your name. The data about you will be kept private and only accessed by myself the primary researcher.

Rights:

- Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are under no obligation to participate in the study.

- You have the right to change your mind and withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason and without any penalty by only sending a message to me. If you decide to do so, all relevant data will be deleted permanently without exception.
- Any new information that might make you change your mind about being in the study will be provided to you.
- If you are interested with the results of this study, you can ask for summary of the findings which also will be posted to wall of the group/page and my profile page.

Questions:

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact with me on Facebook through a direct message or email to dxi789@bham.ac.uk

Consent:

Have you read the information on this message and do you agree to participate? (YES or NO?)

This research is conducted by the supervision of Prof. Isabelle Szmigin, [REDACTED]

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/business/departments/marketing/news/2012/february/highlighted-profile-doga-istanbulluoglu.aspx>

Consent Form for Permission to Use Quotations

First of all, I would like to thank you for accepting to be part of this study. Here, you can find some information about the study.

Purpose: This research aims to investigate customer's online complaining behaviours on Facebook. I hope to learn more about the experiences of people who make online complaints on Facebook and to better understand the role of online interaction in those complaining activities. After the research is completed, the findings are going to be used in my dissertation for the degree of Ph.D. in Marketing in Birmingham Business School and also I hope to publish the study in an academic journal, and may present it at academic conferences. More detailed information about the study can be found on my profile page.

Procedures: If you decide to be give permission to use a direct quote, this means researcher is going to use only your exact words without any other personal information. A pseudonym (fake name) will be used instead of your name.

Risks: There are no foreseeable risks of discomforts in this study.

Confidentiality:

To protect your confidentiality, your name will not appear in any published material. You will be assigned a pseudonym (fake name) that will be used instead of your name.

However, it is possible for somebody to take a quotation from the research and use a search engine (e.g. Google, Bing) to find the actual page online. A motivated person could therefore break the pseudonym disguise assigned in the research and trace the original posting. Even though, this is very unlikely, if you do not want to be traced back to your initial post at any time, it is advised not to consent to this form.

The data about you will be kept private and only accessed by myself the primary researcher.

Rights:


- Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are under no obligation to participate in the study.
- You have the right to change your mind and withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason and without any penalty by only sending a message to me. If you decide to do so, all relevant data will be deleted permanently without exception.
- Any new information that might make you change your mind about being in the study will be provided to you.
- If you are interested with the results of this study, you can ask for summary of the findings which also will be posted to wall of the group/page and my profile page.



Questions:

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact with me on Facebook through a direct message or email to dxi789@bham.ac.uk

Consent:

Have you read the information on this message and do you agree to participate? (YES or NO)

This research is conducted by the supervision of Prof. Isabelle Szmigin, 

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/business/departments/marketing/news/2012/february/highlighted-profile-doga-istanbulluoglu.aspx>

APPENDIX 7.3 –INTERVIEW GUIDE

Complaining in General:

How do you usually go about complaining through traditional/offline channels?

What online channels do you use to complain?

Who do you talk to, normally when you have a product or service that goes wrong from your friends and family?

Problem:

Can you tell me about the problem?

How important was this purchase to you?

When you encountered that problem what was your first reaction?

How did you initially complain?

What you think about this company in general?

What you think about its customer services (online/offline) in general?

How important is “fast complaint response time” for you?

Complaining on Facebook

When did you complain on Facebook?

What made you choose to complain on Facebook?

What response did you expect to get?

What response did you get?

What made it worthwhile to complain on Facebook?

How did you feel about this after complaining on Facebook?

Were there any drawbacks of complaining on the Facebook?

Which section did you use to complain on Facebook? (official, unofficial, anti-brand, issue specific pages?)

Were you a member of this page/group before this incident? Do you consider yourself having a continuous relationship with the page or other members?

What was the reason of using this particular page/group?

Did you post anything else on Facebook about the same issue, maybe on your status or another group? What was the purpose of that post? How different do you consider these two posts?

Do you feel confident with using different Facebook sections?

Who were the people you wanted to reach?

What you think when companies delete posts?

Is this happened to you before? How did you feel about it?

What did you expect to happen next after making that post?

Who were the people you wanted to reach?

What sort of responses were you expecting from them?

What is the cost of complaining on Facebook for you (not necessarily cost in terms of money)?

Information on the particular post (questions here change for each participant)

Use of particular tones, words, typing styles, punctuations in the post?

Use of photo or picture in the post?

Use of other online/offline channels simultaneously with Facebook?

Why do you think it is important to talk about these issues with others on Facebook?

Loyalty to the company?

Knowledge on competitors?

Intention to exit? Actual exit?

General boycott behaviour?

Boycott behaviour on Facebook?

Design of Facebook or particular page? Audience of particular page?

Habits of sharing posts on profile pages?

Outcome:

Was this your first experience of complaining on Facebook? Tell me about others?

How did you feel after complaining on Facebook?

How did you feel after typing that message?

How did you feel after receiving comments from other people?

How did you feel after the company response (or lack of response)?

Have you had any other attempt to complain about the same problem? How?

Why do you think it was worth complaining on Facebook?

How is it different than other methods for you?

How would you compare it with a past experience of traditional/online complaining?

Finally, what was the overall result of your complaint? How did you feel about this?

APPENDIX 7.4 –SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT: VIDEO INTERVIEW

Interview 7 (2 May 2012, 2:30 pm, Skype Video Chat)

Participant: Hello

Doga: Hello

Participant: Hi

Doga: How are you today?

Participant: I'm not doing too bad

Doga: Thank you again for accepting to talk with me.

Participant: Sure

Doga: As I said on my first message, I'm doing Phd in the University of Birmingham. And my study is about online complaining behaviours, especially on Facebook.

Participant: OK

Doga: This study has lots of implications, and I guess you said you have already read my summary so you know already about it. The most important part for me is to understand what do consumers really want. This is why having a chat with you is really important for my study.

Participant: OK

Doga: If you don't mind I'm going to start with my questions.

Participant: yeah, go for it.

Doga: First part of the questions are about your complaining behaviours in general.

Participant: OK

Doga: So I would like to ask you, how do you usually go about complaining through the traditional methods, like without internet?

Participant: ehmm... Well... normally, I'm pretty tolerant with most things, so I don't normally offer a lot of complaints and feedbacks to most of the businesses that I go to, so umm, if I receive exceptional service somewhere, I let somebody who works there know that err it was really good or I really enjoyed the experience

Doga: OK

Participant: But, umm, I wouldn't say that I... normally offer a lot of feedback to most of the businesses, I normally just go through it.

Doga: OK. What if you had a problem when you have an important issue with a product or service?

Participant: If I had... a real problem or I needed to have, I thought I was entitled to a refund... then I would normally approach... customer service staff or somebody to let them know... what the problem was and what their policies for handling that kind of an issue.

Doga: OK. What about online methods? When you are on the internet?

Participant: Errr.. Depending on how much hurry in I'm. Normally immediately will send... err just an email. If there is phone number available I call it, err, I prefer to talk to real people but if not then I send an email... umm, and my last option will be to fill up some type of like... a lot of companies now have like a...emm..like a... series of drop down menus where you select different problems going on, especially like technology companies have series of drop downs, that's probably my least favourite because I feel like my emails normally include enough information, and so I don't like spending all the time doing that

Doga: OK

Participant: Errm... yea, normally I do that.

Doga: You just said normally if there is an option of phone number, you prefer that one.

Participant: yeah, definitely.

Doga: Can you tell me more about that? Why would you prefer that one?

Participant: Emm, I feel like as long as there is not ridiculous wait time, errn.. I can take care of the business much faster with the phone call.

Doga: OK

Participant: Errm... and normally by the time I finished writing email I could have taken care of the whole issue if I just called.

Doga: OK

Participant: So, saves time and it seems, it is also about connecting with the people too, so it is not a part of that too, having more human interaction.

Doga: I see, ok. Yea, thank you for that. And apart from talking with the company, from own circle of friends and family, normally who do you talk to when some sort of problem happens? When something goes wrong?

Participant: emm, I mean, it depends on, I guess who is there and if I have a major issue, I'll voice it to somebody who is around but normally I don't, I don't normally bring most of my issues to.... my family for example because I don't live with them but somebody... But sometimes I talk to other friends and normally I seek advice from people who had similar

problems, erm, in order to see what their opinion is and how to, how do fix the problem or overcame it.

Doga: OK, thank you. Now, I'm going to move onto another section.

Participant: Sure

Doga: This is mostly about your post on Facebook, the one which was about Skype and iTunes. I don't know if you remember it

Participant: sure

Doga: when I first contacted you, because I saw this on page of Skype. You said "please Skype, stop updating yourself in every three days, it is becoming worse than iTunes now"

Participant: yeah

Doga: can you tell me about the problems you had with Skype and iTunes.

Participant: Oh, I didn't have a problem as so much as, ehm... it annoys... both, ee, iTunes especially whenever there is a minor update to the software, whenever you launch the software occasionally while you are using the software pop-up the box, emm, normally if I'm opening iTunes to play a song or to, I want to immediately engage with the media, I have to click cancel or OK or whatever... in order to get around that. I find the way requesting update it seems to be really frequent I think every I would say it seems like at least once in every month maybe two months, there is a minor or major update comes for iTunes and they expect you to download it errm, and in a lot of times the problem, you are having a problem with the software and you say well I have to download the update before we will help you with that, eem, so I don't know... I have a criticism for that because for example ermm... Microsoft for their... for some of their software updates in the background automatically, ermm which I really like and...the so the optional, the forced option of choosing something to download in every few weeks is is is kindda annoying for me, I feel like they should release software that doesn't have bugs in it after a lot of testing instead of kind of doing this little by little kind of deal, so I rather update once in every six months instead of you know six times in six months so...

Doga: OK, I see, so would you consider this as a severe issue for you, like an important issue that might change your ideas about the product itself.

Participant: Probably not, probably not, I mean... if I had another option besides iTunes, I would probably use it but there isn't.

Participant: so I have an apple, ipad and they pretty much tied me into that software, it is great software, I really do like the way it operates most days ermm, but there is just that small annoying thing.

Doga: OK. I see, and ehm, what was your first reaction when you realized that there is this annoying issue going on with the programs?

Participant: Errm... I couldn't really say, I mean... I think I probably have been using Skype for about 5 years, almost instantly when skype came into mainstream; I've been using Skype and iTunes as well. And.... so I think the comment you saw on Facebook was probably my first complaint about the software except the five years of these issues (giggles)

Doga: OK

Participant: I decided to... voice my frustration to my friends, emm... actually I wasn't sure that it would be even visible to the public when I posted it, but I guess it was.

Doga: Oh, ok. so you didn't know about this, this is also interesting for me. So you wanted to share it only with your friends originally but it went public??

Participant: yeah, I guess, I mean, I don't really have a lot of privacy concerns about Facebook. So, emm, especially with something like that I don't really care if a lot of people sees it or nobody sees it.. but, emm, so yeah it wasn't a big deal, I was surprised that somebody, anybody actually had read that (giggles) And so I didn't get a response from Skype or iTunes after I posted, even though I tagged them in the post.... Erm neither of them approached me and said we are sorry for releasing updates all the time, anything like that.

Doga: so then what made you choose to complain on Facebook, when you didn't have any other complaints?

Participant: Ermmm, (pause) I don't know, I guess I only thought that it enough is enough and.... put it up but probably not good enough reason like the majority thinks apparently.

Participant: I mean, the the the post probably went a sandwich between two videos of... of cats sneaking around somebody's house or something

Doga: (giggles)

Participant: you know and that's I think that's kinda nature of things I don't normally engage with Facebook not in the public feed with things that are really important, normally things that are really important or things that matter to me I'll use a private Facebook group or umm... a... a message chat or something like that, I don't like to put the most important things up, sometimes I do, I shouldn't have said that, but most of the time I don't

Doga: (giggles) OK, so is there any specific privacy concern about this? Can you help me to understand this a little bit more? What are your motivations for this?

Participant: uh huh, well (pause) yeah, I think (pause) I think... I guess I should say I don't really think.... about that, I never really examined.... you know my motivates for doing something like that, emm... normally if I have extra ordinarily bad experience with a

company then I will complain a lot about it on social medias, ummh, just to make sure that my friends don't use that company, that software so that they can avoid the pain themselves, ermm, but it is more of a, this specific one is just kinda like.... you know I noticed that both iTunes and Skype update at the same time so I cannot use those softwares because they are updating and I'm kinda annoyed that I have to wait, 20-30 minutes for those download and setup and then I have to restart my computer you know it is just interrupts with my workflow. So.... you know I guess at that point I was like I don't have anything else to do while I'm waiting for this so I just Facebook about what I'm doing right now.

Doga: OK, I see, you actually complained on Facebook at the same time when they were updating

Participant: yeah yeah

Doga: in other words when the problem occurred, just immediately after??

Participant: probably yeah, normally with with.. things like Facebook I don't normally... if a day or two passes, I'm not gonna even remember it so it is something that most of the posts I put on.... Facebook or Twitter or anything like that are just my immediate reactions to something, they are not... a result of well thought out logic or reason or anything like that

Doga: OK, so where were you expecting any kind of response to your friends or companies?

Participant: well, hmm, I guess I didn't expect.... what the public perception of them is, especially Facebook, I think on Twitter they are more... more open to that. But a lot of the time they hide these posts and they only have the official company posts show up on there, at that time I think I had a wall, I didn't have the new company pages, which they just released a few weeks ago.

Doga: yeah

Participant: uhmm, so I guess I didn't realized..... that so I didn't really expect a response and I didn't get one.... And I'm trying to remember if I had any comments from friends on that post. I guess I can look it up but needs a lot of work.

Doga: it is too old, it must be, it will be very difficult to find now. Don't worry about it.

Participant: yeah, it buried yeah, erm, but I guess I would... would... expect a couple people to click like and some say... oh my gosh I'm doing that right now, it is so annoying something like that cause normally everybody gets the update at the same time, umm... within a few days so.

Doga: yeah, OK. So because you don't remember what response you get, maybe I can assume that it wasn't a lot. Like you didn't create a big fuss among your friends.

Participant: no, not in that post, no.

Doga: OK, did you ever think about the customer services of these two companies before, like about their responsiveness towards their customers, how would you evaluate that?

Participant: yeah, they both... have notoriously bad customer service, umm, they don't have phone numbers that you can call, either one of them and eerm... I might now I'm pretty sure they don't at least I couldn't find them, and... they both quiet slow to respond, actually Skype doesn't even way of a contacting unless you sign up Skype pro which requires some certain amount of money per month, emm, I use Skype.... I have a Skype plan so I can use skype to call States and Canada but that doesn't qualify me to use their customer service.... So I have (unauditable speech) their knowledge based community which never answers any questions so ermm... Skype has really bad customer service in that regard. Although, the product is really good so I don't really have any issues with it. And... iTunes in contrast normally respond within 24 hours but still it means 24 hours down time... erm if I have problem with it.

Doga: OK, so does this affect your attitude towards complaining?

Participant: yea, I mean, if it is a company really good, I won't complain about them. Even if they did something wrong, I would let it go. For example, like I really like Delta Airlines, erm.. and of course if you fly with an airline, you are going to have problems all the time and.... so I had lots of problems with Delta but I don't complain about those problems normally online. Because I really like them and respect them. And so that's one example of that kind of a situation, I... if if if they are normally doing something well, then I'm less likely to complain, if there is consistently bad behaviour or if it is my first time to using them and.... if the first time I use them is a bad experience then I would probably complain.

Doga: OK, thank you. I'm gonna move on to another section. This is about complaining on Facebook, not necessarily specific to that post, we've been talking about.

Participant: OK

Doga: Do you think, is it worthwhile to complain on Facebook?

Participant: No (laughs)

Doga: (giggles) why not?

Participant: No, it is not. I think it is it is about as effective as hitting a pillow.

Doga: (giggles) ok, can you explain that?

Participant: You know you get upset about something, you wanna do something about it in order to express that emotion and so I think, erm... yea that, and then it offers me... an opportunity to call misery to my friends, ermm, so they can kidda sympathise and maybe they can by clicking like... or if they view my post as particularly clever they can click like or I can comment, something like that, provide me some sort of internal validation but that doesn't actually change the companies, I don't think that... that is used that way. Twitter for

example, I know people use for erm... customer service frequently, so if there is a negative comment a lot of companies will respond, that's becoming a fad, I don't see that in Facebook. Erm, I haven't received any messages as a result of my negative complaints.

Doga: OK, why do you think is that happening? Is there a difference between Facebook and Twitter?

Participant: ...Emm (pause) I think it is because erm... Twitter is kinda being more accepted as, eer, (pause) I would say Twitter has a different audience, maybe not a different audience but a different usage than Facebook. Facebook seems to be very much about connecting with friends, emm, sometimes organisations. I don't like, erm, as I told you I do social media consulting and... we do a little bit of that stuff for our clients and emm... we always establish a Facebook presence, no matter what, to get likes or to get or erm to build status and get our news in front of people, emmm, but we don't use it as a way of doing... errr... customer service, emm, yea, that could be an area that we could change, that really hasn't occur to us to do that, because I haven't seen a lot of good examples that have been done already, Twitter it seems like a better way of doing that... because there is much better, errr, what is the word...emm... practice in Twitter... with hashtagging companies. So... the hashtag is very popular, Facebook introduced the @ symbol kind of late... after so, most people don't use the @ symbol, they don't tag.

Doga: they don't even know how to use it

Participant: yeah, they don't really know how to use it and then they don't tag their pages on their posts so when they are making a complaint they just say iTunes and you know. Even the one you saw the one I talked about iTunes that was a rarity when I actually remember "oh I should use the @ tag" to get them to engage them that would put a cross... and ah and err.. that practice is not common in Facebook and it becomes less effective in that way, whereas on Twitter everybody does it.

Doga: What you said about this tag symbol and linking it the page of itunes was interesting. I remember in the beginning you said you weren't expecting the companies to see you complaining and now you said you tagged it deliberately. So what was your reason to create that tag if it wasn't for the company?

Participant: I would say that it was half way so my friends can click and see what I'm talking about and the other half would be... Facebook has a cool technology... because it is there, kind of... you know what I'm saying, you can so why not do it.. erm and this is kind of I'm kinda tech person so if... something is there then I just use it even if it is not practical or not... necessarily the best way to doing it, emmm, it is kind a way, I... I'm about things, I wasn't thinking it was going to appear on those pages, I'm actually glad that it did... I think that is probably a good thing that they actually allow those posts to show up on their pages.

Doga: OK. Was this your only complaint on Facebook?

Participant: (pause) Ermm... I'm sure I complained about other things.

Doga: Is there anything significant that you can remember now? Any other issues?

Participant: (pause) Ermmm... I complained about the weather, I know... I complain.. I complain about Morocco has lots of bureaucracy and funny cultural things that displease me often, emm, I complain about those things... sometimes, I complain about bureaucracy and government and stuff like that but emmr what else? Ermmm (pause)

Doga: if you can't remember it, it is ok.

Participant: yeah

Doga: so how do you feel after you make a complaint on Facebook?

Participant: how often?

Doga: no, no. How did you feel after it?

Participant: oh! Erm, (pause) I guess I have to experiment with that. I don't think I can honestly tell you, I can't remember...

Doga: OK, no problem

Participant: ...how I felt cause I haven't done in a while, so

Doga: OK, no problem.

Doga: Do you think are there any drawbacks of complaining on Facebook?

Participant: yeaahh, I mean, I think there are a couple of different kinds of drawbacks. One erm... I don't really think it is necessarily positive to be.... eerr a complainer, it doesn't help you think ... positively about your own life and doesn't help you to focus, well you know, I think it is good to focus on more positive things and it helps you to be happier and it helps you... accomplish more during the day instead of just morning and complaining all the time. And erm, two... err... I think there is prestige factor; I don't wanna be seen as somebody who just uses Facebook to complain about the things all the time. I think it is good to put content there that would help you to entertain people or make them happy or add something valuable to their day.... Whereas complaints don't do that.

Doga: OK I See. Did you have any negative experiences about one of your complaints?

Participant: hmm.. no.. not that I can't remember.

Doga: Ok, good. I remember in one point you said that sometimes you write things to let your friends know about the companies so they don't use the same companies or products.

Participant: right.

Doga: Can you tell me more on that? How is it different, for example?

Participant: Umm, well, I don't know if you ever have a Virgin mobile phone but I think they are the worst company for the mobile phones. Hmm... especially in states, I don't know how is it in UK, it is different, different companies. Erm, in states, it is an awful company and their customer services are awful so I wanted to make sure that none of my friends ever use that. That was like, that's one example I was thinking of immediately. Erm, I'm not sure if that answers your question, what was your question again?

Doga: How is it different to use Facebook to tell your friends now compare to other platforms?

Participant: Ermm... I think it is easier. Umm.. it allows me to immediately make a post, you know I'm not gonna be able to call my friends and remember something like that, and it is kind of a public... area if you want.... Umm, so it doesn't... I can send one thing out... and... you know... one putting on Facebook shows my level of enthusiasm about it which means it is not very high cause it is on Facebook. If I had very enthusiastic I would call my friends and say "hey don't do this or do this" or ... ermm chatted them something like that... so I think, you know... when you see something on Facebook, you can probably assume that a middle level of enthusiasm about it and umm... and a... yeah.. I guess, I guess I really don't know about that... I think it is just a... erm easiest quickest way to get the message out.

Doga: OK, I also want to ask one question about the tone of your message. When you were writing, it doesn't need to be about that participant post, could be general, do you have any preference in terms of the tone of your message?

Participant: yeah... I like... I like....I like it to be umm, sound cleaver or... ermm, sarcastic.... or something like that. I think it should be normally funny, I mean... I think.... that just stating that "itunes sucks" or something like that, is not constructive or anything like that... and um, normally that's really short and nobody is actually read that anyways.

Doga: OK

Participant: Erm.. yeah, something that, cause I don't want .. I'm not complaining to bring all my friends to down about something, I want them to see ... oh you know He is actually thought of this to make it creative ... you know... post or something like that. Ermm.

Doga: I see. OK. Do you think did it serve to its purpose?

Participant: yeah, I mean they serve the purpose sometimes, people comment back and it creates conversations, but sometimes it doesn't, because nobody replies.

Doga: OK.

Doga: (giggles) I'm about the finish, this is the last part.

Participant: sure

Doga: It is about the outcome. How did you feel after this post?

Participant: how did I feel about it?

Doga: yeah

Participant: oh, I would say ... I don't know (long pause) ummm... (pause) I don't know... I would say good about it, I think I generally always feel good after making a post on... on Facebook, I feel like I contributed to that all thing. Emm. (pause) So I think there is erm... part of... you know, in my work part of the experience of the website is to... to find satisfaction for having accomplish something on the website. So whenever you accomplish something on the website, so you feel slightly level of satisfaction inside. So Facebook is really no different. They... they kinda constructed those boxes and, and... the posts all that stuff erm, in a way to give you satisfaction for having an accomplishment you know like "woow I've created a post, I see it right in the top so it makes me think that everybody else sees that top right... and automatically..." and all other that "oh look that little @ tags I've added and made links looks really cool". So it provides like I would say that Facebook provides me a decent level of feedback, erm... positive feedback... so then again... I'll probably forget about that post ten minutes later. Emm.

Doga: (giggles) OK

Participant: yea

Doga: my next question is how did you feel after receiving comments from other people, but because you said you don't remember receiving any feedback.

Participant: On that post, I don't remember but erm I would say whenever I receive comments on any post or anything I make on Facebook unless the comments are off base, umm, (pause) I will, I feel validated.

Doga: can you explain that a bit more?

Participant: yea, I feel like erm (pause) when you create a conversation on Facebook... cause like I said the majority of the posts people make stays completely unnoticed, it goes under, so system does respond, it is validating to see somebody cares about the same issue either enough to agree with me or click the like button, write a comment or have a dissenting opinion something or disagreement, and so in any scenario disagreement or agreement or anything like that I would say, I feel good about it, I feel like... I've created a good conversation, I've made somebody else aware of the issue... and even if they , erm, even... erm (pause) if it doesn't actually benefit them in any other way in any way like the itunes thing. Ermm, they can simply say oh at least somebody else is annoyed by this... erm so...

Doga: OK, I understand that. So, how would you compare this complaining on Facebook with any past experience of traditional complaining?

Participant: Probably, not effective. (giggles)

Doga: OK, why?

Participant: Actually if I wanna put a complaint on that, I won't. If I actually wanna see any type of change result... from one of my complaints in the business... or my relationship to that business, I won't use Facebook. Facebook is just for me and my friends, and my connections. Erm, o I don't expect Facebook to have any real world results, ermm with business. Unless for example... unless somehow I was contributing... say some software company building some new update or something like that, and everybody hated it the way the software was and everybody was complaining about it, well companies can see that, they can see "ok, everybody complaining about that", so being one in huge numbers I think has some of it, some impact. Errm, in what companies do... Ermm, but again that's not the best way, I think writing an email to that company carries so much more weight... that a Facebook comment, ermm because at least... somebody from that company has to read that email. Even if they don't respond to it, they have people... they are paying people to read the comments, soo, it's building up some, some level of, err... (pause) what's the word I'm looking for... it builds up awareness of the issue.

Doga: OK. That's the end of my questions. Is there anything you want to add about complaining, Facebook, that post?

Participant: No, no. How long you have been working on this dissertation?

Doga: two year and a half now

Participant: two years on this dissertation. Wow.

Participant: OK. Emm. So when you expected to finish you work on this.

Doga: Well, if everything goes according to plan one more year.

Participant: another year, oh wow

Doga: yeah, phd is a total of 4 years.

Participant: what is the phd for?

Doga: marketing

Participant: oh, ok.

Doga: thank you very much for your time and effort.

Participant: Sure

Doga: IT was really helpful, I believe my research is going to benefited a lot.

Participant: Ok, great.

Doga: You can contact with me anytime on Facebook or my email address which is in my messages, if something comes up.

Participant: OK

Participant: No, just let us now, when you are done, and you are with what you hope with, I'll like to see it.

Doga: yes, of course, when I published, I can send a copy, I'll like that

Participant: I'll appreciate this, send us an pdf or something.

Doga: yes, of course

Doga: thank you very much again.

Participant: it was nice to meeting with you

Doga: it was, yes, thank you again. Bye bye

Participant: bye bye

Total time: 36:42 minutes

APPENDIX 7.5– SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT: TEXT-BASED INTERVIEW

Interview 14 (1 June 2012, 3:00 pm, Facebook text chat)

Doga: Hello! Once again thank you for accepting to talk to me

Doga: I'm here and whenever you are ready we can start :)

Participant: Hi, what do you want to know?

Doga: My study is about complaining behaviours on Facebook. I'm particularly trying to understand why and how consumers complain on Facebook. This study has a lot of implications but for me, one of the most important one is about understanding what do consumers want and expect from companies. In order to be able to understand that, it is really helpful and valuable for me to talk to you about this.

Participant: Ok, just ask! LOL

Doga: oh, thank you

Doga: can you tell me about the problem you had with Amazon

Participant: I pre-ordered a copy of "Diablo 3", a videogame I've been (like every fan of the series) waiting to be release for more than 10 years.

Participant: When I buy from Amazon products that require payment to customs, such as this, I ask them to send the package to a P.O. box on Skybox that handles the payment.

Participant: They open the package, check the content and invoice, re-package and send it to my home address here in Brazil.

Participant: What happened is that I received an email from Amazon saying that the game had already been sent by DHL. When the promised deadline for the arrival was overdue and I had received no notice from Skybox, I used the tracking number on the email to try to find out if there was any delay, and found info saying that the "package was damaged, with no product and the client (Skybox) had refused it".

Doga: I see

Doga: When you encountered this problem what was your first reaction?

Participant: I opened the Amazon site and contacted the online chat.

Doga: Did they help you to solve the issue?

Participant: No. I explained the issue, said that the product was missing (it was most certainly stolen somewhere along the way), and asked for a solution, but they said they could not send me a replacement product before the other game arrived back at the company.

Doga: I understand

Doga: and then how did you initially complain?

Participant: I explained that, according to the info by DHL, the product was LOST, and that it would never arrive back.

Doga: When did you complain on Facebook?

Participant: I also explained that this purchase, being a pre-order, had some advantages, and that I would lose them if I just made another order. They said they could do nothing and I was forced to accept a refund. THEN, I tried sending an email to customer services and, again, there was no solution.

Participant: That's when I got furious and complained on Facebook and Twitter.

Doga: So I understood you correctly, they refunded your money but this wasn't what you want from company?

Participant: No, because this meant that I would lose the bonuses from the pre-order.

Doga: oh I see

Doga: that must be really frustrated

Doga: What made you choose to complain on Facebook?

Participant : Plus, the game was sold-out. It's the most ordered videogame in the history of Amazon EVER, and I could not know when it was going to be on stock again.

Doga: I see

Participant: I had no other choice, because I had tried all the official channels but the phone (which I could not use because the bill would be astronomical).

Doga: What other official channels did you use?

Doga: like you just said Twitter

Doga: any other?

Participant: Chat and email.

Doga: oh sorry

Doga: Is there any particular reason that you chose Facebook and Twitter

Participant: I knew no other. LOL

Doga: if I understood you correctly, does this mean you wanted to use everything you know

Participant: Yes, I tried all the possibilities. Plus, I figured that, if I complained on channel visible to other customers, they would probably be more willing to solve the issue. I don't usually resort to this kind of "tricks" and I would probably not do this if this was anything other than this game, but I REALLY wanted it.

Doga: I see what you mean

Doga: Do you think are there any differences between complaining on Facebook and on Twitter

Participant: Because the version that is going to be released here in Brazil will probably be PC compatible only, and I'm a Macintosh user.

Participant: I don't know wheter they responded just because of FB, or if they also saw my post on Twitter. The person that contacted me later was from the FB page.

Doga: what I actually want to ask if there is a difference for your perspective

Doga: do you consider these two channels are same/similar or completely different

Participant: I know it may seem a bit futile to make such a fuss for just a game, but I've been a faithfull Amazon customer since 1987 and nothing like this EVER happend. I live in a country where online services are notoriously bad, and I had a lot of trust in the company.

Participant: I suppose FB is a little more "permanent" that twitter. It's like the difference between phoning someone and sendind a telegram. :)

Doga: When you complained on Facebook, what response did you expect to get?

Participant: I don't know. As I said, it was a last resource. I thought they might probably give me the same answer as before, but it was worth a try, and it worked.

Doga: What response did you get? and how did it work?

Participant: The result was that they offered me a US\$ 40.00 purchase bonus to be used on a new order, plus free shipping.

Doga: oh I see, so they offered the refund after the Facebook comment?

Participant: I didn't intend to make another order before, but, since the game was now US\$ 19.00, I was content.

Doga: What did think about this company's customer services before this incident?

Participant: No, the refund had already been done, during the chat session, but I only received the confirmation email after posting on FB.

Doga: oh I see

Participant: I great regard for them. Me and my husband have experienced very few problems with Amazon, and they were all solved very efficiently and quicky.

Doga: did it change now?

Participant: As an example, my husband purchase 2 very expensive computer books that arrived here in Brazil with torn covers (I send books directly to my home because they are tax-free). He send them an email and new books arrived in less than 4 days. And they told us to donate the damaged ones, so we never had to return them.

Doga: wow, that's impressive

Participant: THIS is the Amazon I know and love. LOL

Participant: And it is also why I was so appaled buy the reception to my problem now.

Doga: sorry I couldn't understand what you mean in the last message

Participant: I meant that I have always been so well treated, that hearing "we can't do anything" as an answer to an issue that had NOTHING to to with me was very surprising.

Doga: You must have frustrated

Doga: Do you remember when did you actually typed that post on Facebook?

Participant: To answer your other question: as a matter of fact, no, I still trust them.

Participant: I know this game is an exception due to it's popularity, and I'll most certainly still buy from them in the future. IF this happens again, I don't know.

Doga: oh ok thank you for clarification

Participant: Now I'm not frustated anymore, the new game will probably arrive here tomorrow or on monday. LOL

Doga: oh that's good news :)

Participant: :) As I said, they are usually nice and efficient.

Doga: Do you remember when did you actually typed that post on Facebook?

Participant: I posted on Facebook on the same they I tried the chat. It was a sequence of events.

Doga: do you remember how did you feel about this?

Participant: It was on may 30.

Participant: Absolutely FURIOUS.

Participant: I'm usually a very calm person, but when I get angry I can be a nuisance. I'm stubborn like hell. :)

Doga: what about after you posted it

Participant: Yes, the contact from the FB page employee was almost immediate.

Participant: And she understood the problem and solved it the best way available.

Doga: so if I understood you correctly you felt better after you receive contact from them?

Doga: not after you typed that post?

Participant: But, until she contacted me, I was still angry. Posting on FB was not cathartic at all. LOL

Doga: I see

Doga: What you think when companies delete posts from their Facebook pages?

Participant: This is the first time I tried something like this. :)

Doga: So that never happened to you?

Participant: I understand that companies have to protect themselves. I work with marketing and I know how this works, and that it would be bad for them to leave bad criticism available to everyone, all the time.

Participant: But my comments on the FB page disappeared to me almost instantly – this I didn't expect.

Doga: can you tell me more on that?

Doga: how did you feel about this?

Participant: As I said, I'm stubborn. I kept posting until I felt they would certainly not miss my complaint. I posted 3 or 4 times, a little bit angrier with each post.

Doga: oh I see what you mean

Doga: it must have made you more angry in each time

Doga: and when they responded how did it help you to calm down?

Participant: I mean, I knew that they would probably make my complaint disappear (specially because I read the rest of the page and it was "all flowers", with no other complaints by anybody), but I didn't now they would be so fast. LOL

Participant: Yes, It was like fresh air.

Doga: :)

Doga: can you tell me more that?

Participant: I can get very angry, but I never hold a grudge. When the problem was solved and I knew I would get my product soon, I got back to my usual placid self. LOL

Doga: can we say that it was the outcome that help you to feel better? not the fact that somebody actually responded?

Participant: Both, but only because the outcome was to my advantage.

Doga: I understand

Doga: Have you made any other complaints on any other section of Facebook?

Participant: If they didn't respond I would probably be very angry for the rest of the day, and annoy my husband during dinner. :)

Participant: About this issue, or about any other?

Doga: about the same issue?

Participant: On my timeline

Doga: Why did you feel like making more than one complaint is necessary?

Participant: I was on "annoying mode", and had to talk. I was alone at work, losing time that would be better used on finishing a job that had a tight deadline, and this bothered me A LOT.

Doga: were there any differences between your post on the page and your post on your timeline?

Participant: But I only complain about things on FB when I am really angry. I usually just talk about cats and dogs and music and fun stuff. I know there are people that use FB as a "surrogate psychiatrist" or to talk about serious issues like politics, but I'm not like that. I mostly want to talk about completely useless things.

Participant: The post on my timeline was only visible to my friends, who could obviously not solve anything, but could share my rage. LOL

Doga: So would you say that you had different motivations for those two posts?

Participant: To explain myself better, I don't believe that social networks should be used to talk about private or important things. These are better discussed by email or personally (which is better). Plus, I don't like to expose myself too much.

Doga: I see what you mean

Participant: Yes, I absolutely had different motivations from each post, but I was on a rampage, totally berserk.

Doga: sorry I couldnt understand this last comment

Doga: can you explain this a bit more for me?

Participant: I was angry, and shot bullets everywhere I could. If there was someone else here in the office, they would hear me grumble too.

Participant: I also sent a very angry email to my husband, poor thing.

Doga: it must be really frustrating

Participant: The feeling was just... if Amazon cannot understand the problem, can ANYONE please do?

Doga: what sort of responses you were expecting

Doga: I mean from your friends when they see your timeline post

Participant: Just understanding. Plus, I have friends that are also Amazon customers, and I felt they should be warned.

Doga: have you received comment from them?

Participant: I also informed them when the problem was solved, and how. :)

Doga: oh I see

Participant: Yes, I have nice friends who are also gamers. One of them was particularly bothered, because he was already playing the game and wanted to chat about it.

Doga: how did you feel after their responses?

Doga: can you compare this feeling with the feelings you had when you received response from the company itself

Participant: In fact, he offered me one extra code for the game that he would receive from a special edition he had purchased, but I declined. I don't want to deprive other people from their stuff. LOL

Participant: He was nice

Participant: Oh, It's good to have friends.

Participant: It's different. What you feel when a problem like this is solved is release. Knowing that you're understood by your comrades is a lifelong feeling.

Doga: Would you tell me more about that?

Participant: The "relationship" I have with Amazon is fleeting. I have no actual feelings for them, it's just a commercial thing. I buy, I pay, they send, I receive. I don't think they're good or bad – they're just a company that serves me well, offers me good prices and I'll keep buying from them as long as this balance exists.

Participant: Friends are... friends. Losing one of them creates sadness, which would not happen if I was forced to buy somewhere else.

Participant: sorry for the typos

Doga: no problem

Doga: really sorry I couldn't understand the last part when you said if you were forced to buy something you would lose a friend

Participant: Sorry, what I mean is that a company is NOT your friend. They are not interested in what you feel, only in receiving your money. Thus, the faith you have in them is not like the one you have in your friends. If I had to buy somewhere else, I would "feel" nothing. I would just say "OK, they don't serve me anymore, where can I buy?".

Doga: thank you for explaining

Participant: you are welcome

Doga: I want to go back to our original discussion about your post on the Amazon's page. Do you remember the content of that post?

Participant: I said something about my "Diablo 3 game being lost in DHL limbo, and you have no solution for this".

Doga: Did you have any particular reasons to post that specific content? Or was it mostly impulsive?

Participant: I wanted to sound angry without being too offensive, and to explain the issue with a short text, so that people could read it fast.

Doga: what were your reasons for this?

Participant: As I said before, I hoped they would feel that I was trying to reach and warn other customers. If I posted a long sentence, I was sure that

Participant: many people would not read it. A short sentence, that can be read with just a glimpse, is always better in advertising. LOL

Doga: :)

Doga: I know what you mean

Doga: What made you choose to complain on this particular page compare to other pages about Amazon?

Participant: This was the official Amazon page.

Doga: Did you read the page before complaining or look at other pages? and was there anything that made you decide to use this page to complain?

Participant: Companies don't usually care about "fan" pages, when it comes to complaints (if they ever read them). Fan pages only create reaction when the complain is massive, about one particular issue, or when the collective anger spreads.

Participant: If I posted on a "fan" page, my comment would most certainly not reach anyone in Amazon that could provide me with a solution, and would soon be lost among other customers' posts.

Doga: I understand

Participant: So, I searched for the official page and looked at no other. I just read some of the post on the page to have a feel of what they let pass along, and posted.

Doga: were you aware that Amazon customer service actually replies to posts on this page? (because some companies do not)

Participant: No. I knew someone was going to read my post, and hoped to hit the bullseye.

Doga: ok I see

Doga: so we are almost there

Doga: the last part of my questions

Doga: Why do you think it is worth complaining on Facebook?

Participant: Plus, from my previous experience with them, I know that they usually respond to contacts. I hoped it would work with FB as well.

Participant: The fact is, I don't know if it's worth. I know It worked on this issue, and this issue alone. Will I try this again in the future? Yes, if I have a problem with a company that I feel is serious enough. But I would be naive to expect the same outcome from every company. As I said, Amazon is one of the "kind" ones.

Doga: So how is complaining on Facebook different than other methods for you?

Participant: It worked

Participant: :):):):):)

Doga: what if I ask how would you compare any other complaining experience with the experience on Facebook?

Participant: It was easy. If you know the Amazon page, you know that their contact info for complaints is not that user-friendly, and you have to click on quite some links to get there. This is obviously on purpose, and every smart company does it. :) On FB, you just search for the page and post.

Doga: If I understand you well, you are saying it is easier to contact company directly?

Participant: No. I'm saying that smart companies do not want to receive complaints, and they purposely turn this in a specially tiring job for the customer. If you want to buy, you can easily do it with a few clicks. If you want to complain, you have to search the page for the means to do it, there is NEVER a link on the home page. :)

Doga: Oh I see now

Doga: Finally, how would you evaluate the overall result of your complaint?

Participant: However, FB created a direct, easy link between customers and companies. If you are lucky, like I was, you can send your complaint with just one click and have a fast, clean answer.

Participant: The whole process was tiring, but it worked, and I'm content. I would be happier if my game had arrived on the 30th of May as expected, though. LOL

Doga: :)

Doga: This is the end of my questions, thank you very much, is there anything else that you want to add?

Participant: Not really, I already talked too much. I hope that is useful to your research.

Doga: It was really helpful; I believe my research is going to be benefited a lot. :)

Doga: Do you have any questions for me?

Participant: Please feel free to contact me if you have any more questions. My FB is usually on all the time, at work, because I use it to talk to my husband. :)

Doga: thank you very much

Doga: I appreciate this a lot

Participant: No, I don't have any questions. Thanks for your interest.

Doga: I hope you'll have good time with your game :)

Doga: I want to thank you one more time for your time and effort.

Participant: no trouble

Doga: You can contact me at any time using Facebook or my email address: dxi789@bham.ac.uk if something happens or you change your mind

Participant: I would just ask you to not forget to mention that Amazon DID solve the problem. It was a little difficult, but I must give them credit for that. :)

Participant : With a little help from my angry self, but... nevertheless... :)

Doga: I guess they tried to do the best, because it was already late to receive it on time

Participant: Yes. And I was lucky that the person who read my complaint was nice and in good spirits. LOL

Participant: goodbye

Doga: don't worry about it, these are all parts of the story, and I'll mention it as a whole

Participant: OK

Doga: that's great

Doga: thank you again

Doga: goodbye

Doga: have a nice afternoon! :)

Participant: bye!

Doga: byee

Total time: 2 hour 03 minutes

APPENDIX 8.1 – EXAMPLES OF COLLECTIVE MESSAGES ON FACEBOOK

Example 1:

Nestlé, the maker of Nestea, is testing and paying others to conduct painful and deadly tea tests on animals. Please urge Nestlé to join cruelty-free brands like Lipton Iced Tea and Snapple and stop all animal tests! <http://bit.ly/kz0GME>

Example 2:

Dear Google,

This is in regards to recent Google Earth Version where the incorrect and erroneous term Arabian Gulf, was used to identify the Persian Gulf.

Please be advised that the internationally, historically and geographically correct name for the body of water situated south of Iran between Iran and Saudi Arabia is the Persian Gulf. The Persian Gulf has no other internationally recognized name.

The historically and geographically correct name of Persian Gulf has been endorsed by the United Nations on many occasions. The last UN Directive endorsing the name of the Persian Gulf was Directive reference ST/CS/SER.A/29/Add.2 on August 18th 1994.

Please keep in mind that the National Geographic Society made a similar mistake in the Fall of 2004, using the term "Arabian Gulf" in their online version as well as the 9th edition of their Atlas, only to recognize their error within a short time and correct their mistake.

There is no room for politics in the world of geography, nor should Google pander to any special group. I hope that you will take the necessary steps to correct the prejudiced and false name in the Google Earth Version.

I must now urge you to correct the mistake on Google Earth Version site as a matter of urgency. I shall wait your affirmative response.

Kind Regards

Example 3:

"URGENT!!!To all parents: Nestlé Foods is asking everyone to return all BANANA BABY FOOD with expiration date 2012 because they may likely contain GLASS. Please copy & paste for all babies safety. Bar code761303 3089 73. EVEN if you are not a parent, please help forward this post .You could help save a child today"

APPENDIX 8.2 – CHARLIE’S POST WITH ILLUSTRATION

Illustration:



Post: Nike factory workers in Indonesia make \$12-18.00/month (about \$.050/day).
Nike brings in a monthly profit of \$179,166,166.00
How you can buy this slave-made product, we'll never know.

APPENDIX 8.3 – EXAMPLES OF ALTERED PHOTOS FOR MOCKING



*Both photographs are from the group called 'I hate Apple'

APPENDIX 9.1 – LIST OF INTERVIEWEES' POSTS

Participant 1 – Alexis

Nestle – Official Company page

Nestle gains 34 milliards per year and is proud of spending 110 millions in 10 years for the cacaoplan (that not only deals with child labour). Your're chocolat contains child slavery! You could buy a plantage and controll it...Or at least if you incorporate a joint venture with other cacao companies. Couldn't you? The fairtrade labels are able to control their suppliers and they are willing to suspend the contracts in case of child labour. What about you?

Nestle – Official Company page

Next try...Nestle gains 34 milliards per year and is proud of spending 110 millions in 10 years for the cacaoplan (that not only deals with child labour). Your're chocolat contains child slavery! You could buy a plantage and controll it...Or at least if you incorporate a joint venture with other cacao companies. Couldn't you? The fairtrade labels are able to control their suppliers and they are willing to suspend the contracts in case of child labour. What about you? Please give me a concrete answer or an email address of somebody that could help me....

Participant 2- Ayse

Status

Dear Domino's, I think you might be missing pizza's whole raison d'etre: It is for being tasty.

Status

Today, I hate MTA... How come their trains get broken so easily?

Participant 3- Derin

Status

My never-ending story with npower: after several phone calls and emails we are still at where first we were started

Participant 4 – Tugba

Status

I condemn Avea's new ad

Status

We are with Blackberry and we are aggrieved

Participant 5 – Berna

Status

DON'T BUY CANON CAMERAS, PEOPLE!

Participant 6 – Emre

Status

Avea has service everywhere except inside house, as if we are trying to keep it outside of the building with trenches, cesspools and archers

Status

Peeved by Facebook notifications that does not go away

Participant 7 – Mark

iTunes – Official company page

Dear Skype, please stop updating yourself every 3 days. You are becoming worse than iTunes

Participant 8 – Donna

Amazon Kindle - Official product page

Here is my review of the Kindle Fire from an education perspective. Things I don't like: not integrated with Google apps, no connection to the Android Market, no voice recognition, no camera, no SD card, and limited organization of apps. What is frustrating is that a few of those items would not add to the cost and would greatly improve the user experience and increase its value as an educational tool. Things I really like: home screen navigation, response speed, book, video, and music interface, and the connection to Amazon's elastic cloud. When comparing it to my Dell Streak, it falls very short. My hope is that Amazon will be responsive to consumer feedback and correct some of the shortcomings. Education needs this device to be much more than what it is. Any chance Amazon will rethink its decision to prevent access to the Android Market and Google Apps? If not, I will most likely return it.

Participant 9 – Netja

Status

doesn't like Facebook in the present version.. she cannot see mutual friends doesn't know what her caption is.. if a Facebook team has more time should implement Facebook to be simple and easy to use!!! is she late to make a complain?

Participant 10 – Melinda**Ryanair – unofficial company page**

They pist me off so much that instead take their flight which takes 1 hour and 45 min. (|and its the only airline to my destination), i choose to take coach which was 21 hours!!:)))

Participant 11 – Megan**"i have no reception" is code for "Im with vodafone" – Issue-Specific page**

I want out of my vodafone contract.... my hubby and I both are on vodafone we can be sitting NEXT to each other and we get "sorry this phone is out of range" WTF!

Participant 12 – Selin**Status**

After their latest cheating, I've decided to leave Turkcell. Which one should go for; Avea or Vodafone?

Participant 13- Barbara**Boycott Nestle - Boycott or hate page**

How about we all let the nestle lovers know how much damage this company has done to breastfeeding and babies and childrens lives in order to line their pockets.

<http://www.facebook.com/Nestle> And some information that might be useful: www.babymilkaction.org.uk, www.wikipedia.com/nestle, www.greenpeace.com/kitkat

Participant 14 – Flor**Amazon – Official company page**

Well done, Amazon. My "Diablo III" copy, which I pre-ordered, is lost in limbo; UPS says it's been violated INSIDE THE US (I live in Brazil and use Skybox for my deliveries) and you refuse to send me another copy. I've been a customer for a long time and NEVER had such a problem. Nice way to lose a faithfull customer.

Amazon – Official company page

And now you delete my complaint. Nicer than nice.

Amazon – Official company page

This is fun. Are you going to give me an answer or keep deleting everytning I write?

Participant 15 – Matt

Ryanair – unofficial company page

Get some bloody idea of what your customers are going through. I just seen a young French couple and an elderly German couple almost get into a fight at the airport because your service and process for flying is excessively complicated.

Get a clue and think long term, sit around a table with your directors and start eliminating unnecessary processes. For Petes sake I was only flying from Spain to another part of Spain!

Participant 16 – Sedat

Status

Never again UPS

Participant 17- Charlie

Nike – unofficial company page (See Appendix 8.2)

Nike factory workers in Indonesia make \$12-18.00/month (about \$.050/day).

Nike brings in a monthly profit of \$179,166,166.00

How you can buy this slave-made product, we'll never know.

Participant 18 – Jimmy

Google– Official company page

I generally find your products helpful and discard negative publicity you receive about privacy complaints. But your purposeful neglect of D-Day remembrance puts a bad taste in my mouth.

Participant 19- Liam

I hate apple- Boycott or hate page [he also posted a photo of faulty device]

This is exactly why i HATE apple !

"And just a side comment, I examined the middle connection of that battery cable and it just seems like that one is soldered differently from the other two (on either side of it), as the ones on the side easily came off with the same amoun...t of heat applied to the middle one and the middle seems to have its contact point above the circuit board because when I examined the old battery terminal, there was no residual solder or what looks like a foil contact on the bottom like the other two connections on the sides had. Sounds like an Apple manufacturing process designed into it so do-it-yourselfers cannot do as what we attempted ;)”

Participant 20- Kate**Clothing at Tesco - Official product page**

Why dont tesco make it clear that after 10pm you have to virtually serve yourself, there are no return facilities and there are no fitting rooms available and the staff are the rudest most unhelpful people that I have come across

Participant 21- Dave**Sky– Official company page**

Hi I am having problems with my sky talk I am unable to call out and no one can call in it just goes to engaged tone it won't even ring the free sky number can you please check for issues in the Plymouth area please

Participant 22- Addison**Amazon– Official company page**

Amazon YOU SUCK!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Been trying to log into my account for 3 days now. I've even changed my password several times and you still tell me there's problems with my e-mail/password. I need to know where my order is FROM 5 WEEKS AGO!!!!

Participant 23 - Nolan**Banana Republic- Official product page**

Yesterday, a friend and I visited store 8154 (KCMO Country Club Plaza) and experienced remarkable customer service. It didn't start out that way, however. While browsing the store, we encountered 4 to 5 associates - none of whom looked us in the eye, let alone initiated verbal contact. Undeterred by the unwelcoming staff, we continued shopping.

Eventually, we encountered a respite from the inhospitable atmosphere in the form of a warm and inviting associate named Michelle. She informed us of the Mystery Coupon sale, and asked if we were looking for something specific. Upon discovering that we were merely browsing, she encouraged our further perusal and made herself available should we need her help. My friend later found a shirt that he liked, and, finding that the only available size was on a mannequin, began to look around helplessly for assistance. Two associates even saw my friend tiptoed on a platform (admittedly, a faux pas of safety and decorum, but for lack of service, one must make do) and they scarcely lifted an eyebrow. We backtracked into two different areas of the store to find our friend Michelle, who not only helped us with the shirt, but steamed it, and presented it on a hanger in a bag upon checkout. Wow! We thanked her profusely for her attention & service.

Despite an icy reception by many associates, we were left with an overall positive impression of the store after our interactions with just one. It is commonly known that in terms of service,

shop employees in the Country Club Plaza will either lay it on thick or leave one high and dry. Often, nonverbal (material) indications of affluence determine upon which side of the divide one will fall. Clearly, Michelle understands that the duty of store personnel is not to gauge one's buying power on looks alone, but to treat all of her guests with equanimity and respect - every customer, every time. She is truly an asset to your brand. If the entire staff at 8154 exhibits even half the courtesy we were shown by Michelle yesterday, the store would be the exemplar of service and quality that the Banana Republic brand strives to be.

Participant 24- Lilly

Sky– Official company page

i lose my internet when i get a phone call, what could be the problem? not sure if it is all the time, but have now noticed twice that this has happened

Participant 25- Audrey

Clothing at Tesco - Official product page

Hi , trying to place an order but when it gets to the bank confirmation page nothing loads, is there a problem on your site at the moment?

Participant 26 - Olivia:

Nestle – Official Company page

Don't buy Nestle! Made with Child Slavery!

http://www.salon.com/2012/07/01/nestle_chocolate_is_produced_from_child_labor_new_report_says_salpart/

Participant 27 – Caroline

Tesco – Official Company page

I had a problem recently with the double up vouchers and when I called you customer service team the woman may as well said tough luck she was so frosty and unhelpful. I emailed as the doubled up vouchers were not accepted for the product I had chosen even though it was in the furniture section and not listed as an exclusion anywhere - I did check. So I emailed asking what could be done and now I have lost the vouchers £10 clubcard doubled to £20. Now I got no reply from the site as to what to do and ideally I wanted them back to clubcard vouchers - if I had to spend them Im sure I would have found something. I did try and call before they expired but the lines were to busy on the day I tried and I wasnt in the situation to hold. Can something be done on this or did I lose my reward completely for spending £1000 at tesco as thats what it amounts too. Just to note I never got a response to my email except an automated - this may take 3 days to reply.

Participant 28 – Hannah

Vodafone– Official Company page

Dear Vodafone, I dont appreciate being lied to by someone in your upgrades dept today. The lied to me to try and get a sale. Well sale lost Vodafone...shame shame shame.

Participant 29 – Katie

Tesco – Official Company page

I was in one of your stores today and left £10 worth of chicken breast at the checkout. After 2 hours of trying to get through on phone I eventually spoke to someone who simply said its not been handed in! Surely the woman

at checkout would have seen this lying? No other help was offered & on top of this I noticed some multi buy saving were also not deducted, I am very unhappy with tesco and the service

Participant 30 – Gareth

Boycott Nestle - Boycott or hate page

go to the nestle websites and post things regarding the boycott overload the sites no nastiness be smart and truthful, then hopefully one of those anynomous ppl see it and bring down there websites, than with these consertive moves nestle may feel the pressure and amend the four point plan.. Maybe one or some of u out there could create a pic and link to post on the net

thanks and good luck

Participant 31 – Jessica

Boycott Nike for Signing Michael Vick – Issue-Specific page

Disgusting behaviour from someone who should be a role model. Remember - The wheel turns! He will have to answer for his atrocious actions one day!

Participant 32 – Kellan

Boycott Nike for Signing Michael Vick – Issue-Specific page

yea...I'm done with Nike...I will never support, purchase or buy any of your products again. Thank you so much for endorsing Michael Vick...what a very poor business decision on your part. Better keep a close eye on your bottom line...because it's about to drop !

Participant 33 – Manuel

I hate apple- Boycott or hate page

Just great. My gf won an iPad on a contest (to my disgrace). We spent 3 hours figuring out how to read pdf files from the pc to the iPad (and didn't succeed). So much for the ease of use!

Participant 34 – Paul

Cadbury – Official Product page

Be aware that if you're eating Cadbury's you are supporting an organisation that has closed British factories, has outsourced production to Poland, and feeds the excess profits to greedy hedge fund finance Wall Street billionaires, who sink their tax free booty into the Cayman Islands!

Participant 35 – Oscar

I hate Ryanair - Boycott or hate page

I don't fly Ryanair and encourage all my friends and relatives not to do so. But pretty soon we all will be sorry for allowing this flying coffins to continue operating and to let O'leary to make such big profits from jeopardizing human lives, and still be so cocky about it. His crookedness will have a toll, and we all now.

Participant 36 – Amber

I hate Mc Donald's - Boycott or hate page

Was at a MD Donald's, received a ice tea. It was watery as we tasted it. So we go back into MC Donalds and informed the staff member. The staff member took that cup of tea we sipped out of and placed it at the Drive thru Window for the next person in the drive way. That was so sickening to see. We had to informed the manager to say, are you are going to throw that out! We drink out of it. Don's eat at Mc Donald's.

Participant 37 – Amy

Mc Donald's – Unofficial page

eat here get a stomach ache and get sick and not be able to go swimming cause you ate crap! -
.-" hate it. its the reason im a fat girl

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